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Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transatlantic Relations: Romanticism and the Emergence of a Self-Reliant American Reader

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Abstract

This thesis explores three of Ralph Waldo Emerson's seminal texts, *Nature* (1836), the "Woodnotes" poems (1840, 1841), and *Representative Men* (1850), in a transatlantic Romantic context. Augmenting typical transatlantic explorations of Emerson's literature which often use these three works in demonstration of the various European Romantic assimilations n Emerson's writing, the texts considered in this study are understood to engage with one British work predominately. Emerson engages antagonistically in the pages of *Nature* with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825), in the "Woodnotes" poems with William Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814), and in *Representative Men* with Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841).

In each instance, Emerson engages with a text that he understands to be particularly representative of the intellectual and creative genius that its British author wields and, as such, one that is anxiety-inducing in the influence that it wields. This thesis demonstrates that, in engaging with these works, Emerson performs with increasing sophistication a process of "'creative reading,' that is, an act of reading (influx) through which creation (efflux, expression) is made possible through a transcendence of the past. In doing so, Emerson confronts and attempts to gain independence both from the personal influence that these texts and, more significantly, their authors wield.

In engaging in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* with *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* respectively, Emerson assimilates into his works various elements of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's thought. Each of the three chapters comprising this thesis explores Emerson's intellectual indebtedness in this regard and, as such, the explorations incorporate a scholastic focus like that found in the majority of Emersonian transatlantic scholarship. In each instance, however, explorations of Emerson's works also reveal the American writer's performance of a liberating act of detachment or departure from the ideas with which he engages.

These intellectual detachments distinguish Emerson's thought from that of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle, and are often attended by formal departures from the texts with which Emerson engages. Augmenting typical transatlantic explorations of Emerson's works, this thesis focuses not only Emerson's Romantic assimilations, but also on his detachments.

Finally, in each instance, Emerson's confrontations reflect Robert Weisbuch's assessment in *Atlantic Double-Cross* (1986) that nineteenth century Anglo-American literary relations are 'always more than personal and individual' (21). That is to say, in each instance, Emerson confronts not only Coleridge, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's personal creative and intellectual influence, but their extrapersonal or national influence as British writers. This confrontation of national influence is reflected in the fact that Emerson's detachments incorporate temporal reimaginings, re-visions of time that nullify the potency of the past and of the influence wielded by tradition by emphasising the present and the future, focusing on the subjective power of the mind. As such, Emerson's conceptions of time demonstrate a conflation of two specifically American understandings of temporality as defined by Robert Weisbuch – vertical time and futurism – both developed by nineteenth century American writers in order to nullify the influence of Old World, specifically British, tradition, and to establish an account of time in which the United States' comparative lack of distinct cultural history is excused.

In precis, this thesis demonstrates that *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* issue from Emerson's creative reading of *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* respectively. These acts of creative reading demonstrate in each instance the inextricability of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's 'personal' creative and intellectual influence, as well as their 'extrapersonal' or national influence.

Lay Summary

This thesis explores three instances in which Ralph Waldo Emerson's writing engages with and emerges from antagonistic interactions with texts by three seminal British writers: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Thomas Carlyle.

While Emerson's literature is often considered in the context of his engagements with transatlantic, namely British, Romantic writers and their works, often and most recently, Emerson's writing has been explored for its various and varied connections to Romanticism. Scholars have looked across Emerson's oeuvre and noted the various elements indebted to, assimilated from, and influenced by the writing of various Romantic figures. This thesis augments that approach by identifying three of Emerson's works, two of which are often considered in relation to British influence, in which the American writer engages predominately with a single work. Chapter one concerns the relationship between Emerson's essay, *Nature* (1836) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825); chapter two explores Emerson's engagement in his poems, "Woodnotes I" (1840) and "Woodnotes II" (1841), with William Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814); and finally, chapter three considers Emerson's longer work, *Representative Men* (1850) alongside Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841).

In each instance, Emerson uses the British text as a target for a process by which he confronts and attempts to nullify the influence that its author wields, influence that is at once both 'personal' and creative, as well as 'extrapersonal' or

national. This process, which Emerson outlines obliquely in various works concerned with the relationship between reading and writing, is one in which a writer can be both indebted to a source and self-reliant from it, by first submitting to and assimilating from that source before performing an act of 'detachment' or moving away. Emerson performs this process in his engagements with the three British texts and in doing so attempts not only to distinguish himself and his works intellectually from these influential sources, but also to distinguish himself as an American writer specifically.

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Abbreviations

For regularly cited works, the following abbreviations have been used parenthetically in the text followed by page number and, where applicable, volume.

AR	Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Aids to Reflection*. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Edited by John Beer, vol. 9, Routledge, 1993.
CW	Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Robert Ernest Spiller, and Alfred Riggs Ferguson, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971. 10 vols.
EL	*Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* edited by Stephen Whicher and Robert Ernest Spiller, vol. 3, Harvard University Press, 1959.
F	Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *The Friend*. Edited by Barbara E. Rooke, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1993. 2 vols.
JMN	*The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by William H. Gilman, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960-1982. 16 vols.

L	Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Columbia University Press, 1939. 6 vols.
OH	Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Edited by Michael K. Goldberg, Joel J. Brattin, and Mark Engel, University of California Press, 1993.
SR	*Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdrockh in Three Books*. Edited by Michael K. Goldberg, Joel J. Brattin, and Mark Engel, University of California Press, 2000.

Table of Contents

This thesis considers three of Ralph Waldo Emerson's seminal texts, *Nature* (1836), the "Woodnotes" poems (1840, 1841), and *Representative Men* (1850) in a transatlantic context. More specifically, these works are understood as issuances from Emerson's antagonistic readings of three significant transatlantic texts. In *Nature*, Emerson engages antagonistically with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825), and this engagement is the subject of chapter one. "Woodnotes I" and "Woodnotes II" are positioned in antagonistic relation to Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814), and chapter two centres on the relationship between these texts. Finally, *Representative Men* is an expression of Emerson's antagonistic engagement with Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841), and this engagement is explored in the third and final chapter of this thesis.

In these three instances, the antagonistic nature of Emerson's engagements reflects his confrontation with the intellectual and creative influence wielded by the transatlantic work with which he engages. More significantly, however, each transatlantic text itself is a surrogate for the more pervasive creative and intellectual influence wielded by its author and presents a convenient target for Emerson's confrontation of that influence. This study understands the authorial influence that Emerson confronts in his antagonistic reading to be at once both 'personal; (poetic) as well as 'extrapersonal' (national). Such a conceptualisation is indebted to Robert Weisbuch's ideas regarding nineteenth century Anglo-American literary relations first expressed in *Atlantic Double-Cross* (1986).

Emerson's confrontation of the British writers' personal or poetic influence is reflected in the fact that Emerson engages in each instance with one of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's most 'representative' works. That is to say,

in each instance Emerson confronts the most threatening (influential) qualities presented by each writer – Coleridge's philosophical genius, Wordsworth's talents as a philosophical poet and as a poet of 'low' subjects, and Carlyle's conceptualising of history – by engaging with the text that he considers most representative of that threatening expressive power. Additionally, as expressions of British genius specifically, each of these works, as well as the writers who penned them, pose a second, extrapersonal threat: the spectre of British culture and history which itself jeopardises to American originality (independence).

Each chapter explores Emerson's assimilation of both formal and thematic elements of the transatlantic work with which he engages. This assimilation is considered in light of the fact that each of Emerson's texts also incorporates significant shifts in theme, structure, and style. Such shifts are reflective of what has been described variously as Emerson's unsettling, inconsistent, or circumlocutory style, but in these three instances, the abrupt stylistic and thematic voltas also correspond to significant intellectual and creative departures from the British work with which Emerson engages. This concurrence reflects Emerson's performance of departure from Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's personal poetic influence, and as such, his attempts to distance himself from representative examples of their expression.

Additionally, the above shifts in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* coincide with significant changes in Emerson's presentation of time in the texts. Specifically, in each instance Emerson embraces and emphasises what Robert Weisbuch calls 'vertical time' (*Atlantic Double-Cross* 170). This conception of temporality collapses linear time 'into an expanded present inhabited

by an expansive self,' and is a feature in several examples of nineteenth century American literature that Robert Weisbuch links directly to attempts at combating the threat of British cultural influence (171).

The simultaneity of Emerson's temporal reimaginings and his departures from formal and thematic elements of the transatlantic texts with which he engages – his rejection of elements assimilated into his works prior to his thematic and stylistic shifts – reflects the simultaneous and equal significance of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's personal and extrapersonal influence. Reading *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* as issuances from Emerson's antagonistic reading lends new significance to the nature of the relationship between Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's transatlantic influence and Emerson's mode of expression in three seminal works.

Introduction

By 1850, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle had been friends and correspondents for nearly two decades. They began exchanging letters in 1834, and although their correspondence was not limited to discussion of their literary and intellectual endeavours, as is expected of two men who shared the same profession, the topic of their letters often turned to the subject of work. Such is the case with a letter from Carlyle to Emerson dated 19 July, 1850. In this instance, Carlyle offered his thoughts regarding what was at the time Emerson's latest published work, *Representative Men* (1850). The letter opens with Carlyle's apologies for the amount of time elapsed since his last correspondence (in the later years of their correspondence, intermittent and oftentimes lengthy periods of silence between the writers was common), but the Scottish writer soon transitions into an account of his experience reading *Representative Men* and his opinion of the text.

The passage in which Carlyle records his impressions of *Representative Men* is lengthy in its entirety and will be considered in greater detail in chapter three. For the moment, it is a specific aspect of Carlyle's experience in reading Emerson's work to which I would like to call attention. Nearing the conclusion of his thoughts on the text, Carlyle writes the following of *Representative Men*: '…I generally dissented a little about the *end* of all these Essays; which was notable, and not without instructive interest to me, as I had so lustily shouted "Hear, hear!" all the

way from the beginning up to that stage' (*The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle* 460; original emphasis).

The aspect of the text to which Carlyle's comments refer is the conspicuous and subversive volta that occurs at the end of each of the essays comprising *Representative Men*. Each of these essays ostensibly centres on Emerson's portrayal of one of history's greatest and thus most 'representative' men, and Emerson's case for their representative greatness. In each instance, however, Emerson concludes these portrayals with an account of the manner in which each of his representative men in fact fall short of true greatness; in each instance, Emerson effectively undermines his preceding argument. Again, a more extensive exploration of these shifts and of their significance within the greater conception of history in *Representative Men* appears in chapter three. In this moment, I wish specifically to call attention to the peculiarity of these reversals and the unsettling effect they apparently have on Carlyle as a reader who had, up to that point, 'shouted "Hear, hear!" all the way…'.

Interestingly, Francis Bowen remarked upon a similarly unsettling shift in Emerson's early essay, *Nature* (1836). In an early review of the text for *The Christian Examiner* in 1837, Bowen wrote the following:

> Having thus considered the uses of the material world, its adaptation to man's physical wants, to his love of beauty, and his moral sense, the author turns and aims a back blow at the universe, which he has been leading us to admire and love. The heavens are rolled together like a scroll, the solid earth cracks beneath our feet, "Wide wilderness and mountain, rock, and sea / Peopled with busy transitory groups," are shadows, and exist only in the

> mind. Matter is nothing, spirit is all. Man is alone in the vast inane with his God. (375–376)[1]

Bowen's seismic description of *Nature* reflects his apocalyptic interpretation of the thematic shift that occurs in the final chapters of Emerson's essay. In these chapters, the ground does in a sense begin to crack and give way beneath the reader's feet as Emerson presents an account of the natural world's transparency, its falling away in a 'reverential withdrawing…before its God' (*CW* 1:30). Bowen's description has a dual effect, however, in that it also conveys the unsettling, decentring effect of this thematic shift upon the reader. In Bowen's understanding of the essay, Emerson elucidates his case for the natural world's 'adaptation to man's wants' throughout the first six chapters, only to unceremoniously and without warning execute a philosophical about-face that leaves readers reeling.

The shifts that Bowen and Carlyle identify in *Nature* and *Representative Men* exemplify a pervasive and more general element of Emerson's style: Emerson's works, both prose and verse, often appear to embrace abruptness. In Barbara Packer's understanding, the abrupt and unsettling manner of Emerson's texts is deliberate, and the American writer intentionally courts the decentring quality that is identified by the reviews of his works noted above. In her exploration of Emerson's style that opens *Emerson's Fall* (1982), Packer correlates Emerson's peculiar style with his desire to write literature that provokes intellectual activity, involving the reader actively in the process of reading and interpretation (6).

[1] The quotation to which Bowen turns is from Sir Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde: A Dramatic Romance, in Two Parts*. Interestingly, Emerson would go on to include these very lines the following year in a lecture entitled "Demonology" from his "Human Life" series, read at the Masonic Temple in Boston on 20 February, 1839 (*EL* 3:151–152).

Associating this quality with the emphasis on self-reliance that was fundamental to the American writer throughout his career, Packer describes how Emerson 'did everything he could to make the reader's task difficult' in his works:

> He deliberately rejected the carefully sloped introductions, the graceful transitions, the carefully modulated crescendos and decrescendos of the popular essayistic style. Emerson's beginnings are abrupt, his transitions, equally so. […] The connection between one sentence and another, one paragraph and another, or between anything within the essay and the world outside it, is something Emerson eliminates, something he offers the reader no assistance in forming. Self-reliance is to him first of all what it was to his Protestant ancestors: the liberty to interpret texts according to the Spirit. (6–7)

In the case of the shifts identified by Bowen and Carlyle in *Nature* and *Representative Men* specifically, an additional element augments Packer's account of the relationship between self-reliance and the act of reading. In these instances, Emerson's abrupt stylistic voltas and the thematic developments with which they coincide not only reflect Emerson's attempts to cultivate an active reader, they are products of Emerson's own active and antagonistic reading. That is to say, they are the products of and expressions of Emerson's *own* assertions of self-reliance.

Such an interpretation of the ideological and stylistic shifts in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* is indebted to Julie Ellison's scholarship in *Emerson's Romantic Style* (1984). In the text, Ellison considers how Emerson's prose conveys and demonstrates his dramatization of the 'antagonistic relationships among influence, analysis, and invention' (10). Specifically, the

following explorations of Emerson's three works and of the transatlantic engagements from which they issue are indebted to Ellison's understanding of the abrupt transitions and stylistic discontinuity in Emerson's seminal essays. Ellison's explorations of Emerson's prose demonstrates how transition and discontinuity, among other stylistic elements, reflect the American writer's understanding of reading as an inherently antagonistic act, the 'conscious struggle of the will, the contest between reader and writer, Jacob and angel' (79). Augmenting Ellison's ideas, the following chapters proceed from the notion that Emerson's antagonistic reading practices, which will be discussed at length in forthcoming pages, influence a handful of his works not only conceptually but also in practice. That is to say, there are instances in which Emerson's antagonistic reading practices are directed at specific works, and in such instances these practices are reflected in both stylistic and thematic elements of Emerson's texts.

The following chapters consider three examples of works in which Emerson engages antagonistically with individual and specific texts, and in which this engagement is reflected in both formal and ideological shifts within the American writer's works. In each instance, this engagement an effort to nullify the power he perceives these texts and, more importantly, their authors to wield. Decentring stylistic and thematic shifts in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* gain new significance and further clarity when considered in terms of an act to which Emerson refers as 'detachment' in his accounts of reading and writing. In turn, the nature of Emerson's transatlantic engagements with these three significant writers and their texts is also further illuminated.

Nature and *Representative Men*, two of the texts considered in the following chapters through the lens of detachment, have been noted previously, and to these is added a third example: Emerson's "Woodnotes" poems, first published in 1840 and 1841 respectively. Each of these texts are significant works in Emerson's oeuvre. *Nature* stands as Emerson's first and only attempt to delineate the 'species of moral truth' he calls his 'first philosophy' in a single, unified philosophical treatise *(JMN* 4:78–79*).* Emerson's "Woodnotes" poems, drafted over a number of years, represent one of the writer's first and most carefully considered attempts to delineate this philosophy in verse rather than in prose, in the form of a philosophical poem. Joseph Beach, referring to the poems as two parts of a single entity, describes "Woodnotes" as 'the great comprehensive nature-poem of Emerson' (348). Finally, *Representative Men* is Emerson's definitive attempt at writing history following a period in the 1840s Robert Weisbuch refers to as one in which Emerson 'test[ed] his distinctive thought to see what it could include' (*Atlantic Double-Cross* 179).

In composing each of these seminal works, Emerson is influenced significantly by a perceived exemplar of the type of text that he is himself attempting to write; in each instance, it is a work that Emerson values greatly for its 'representative' nature. Emerson's engagement with these representative works in each instance incorporates acts of assimilation by which the American writer adopts but also often adapts significant formal and thematic elements of the text with which he engages. It is this assimilative practice that renders the connections between Emerson's work and the British text with which he engages so apparent. However, assimilation also necessitates Emerson's detachment. That is to say, it is

exactly because these representative works have the power to influence him that Emerson must perform a departure from them. This influence, is an incursive power that threatens the authority of Emerson's own thought and expression (author-ity), and as such it must be engaged with antagonistically in order to convert this incursive energy into expressive power.

In composing *Nature*, Emerson engages antagonistically with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825), a text representative for Emerson of philosophical genius. "Woodnotes I" and "Woodnotes II" are positioned in opposition to Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814), a text Emerson described throughout his lifetime as the epitome of philosophical poetry, and a poem capable of incorporating 'low' subjects – a quality that some critics disparaged, but that Emerson admired. Finally, *Representative Men* is an expression of Emerson's antagonistic engagement with Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841), a text that encapsulates Carlyle's influential conception of history as biography.[2]

The representative nature of these British texts can only go so far to explain why Emerson turned to them specifically in attempting his own expressions of philosophy, philosophical poetry, and history. There are other works to which Emerson turns throughout his lifetime when he desires inspiration in all of these realms. Numerous scholars have traced Goethe's influence and that of Bacon and Victor Cousin on Emerson, for example, and references to Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Milton litter the American writer's essays – it is clear that Emerson recognises

[2] *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* will henceforth be referred to simply as *On Heroes*.

other literature to be of great intellectual value. However, while the term 'first philosophy' Emerson uses to describe his conception of the world expressed in *Nature* derives from Bacon's term *philosophia prima*, it is not the *Novum Organum* but *Aids to Reflection* against which *Nature* is positioned antagonistically. Similarly, Cousin's conception of dialectical history certainly informs Emerson's understanding of history, as Gustaaf van Cromphout has noted.[3] It is not Cousin's *Introduction à l`histoire de la philosophie* that is placed in opposition to *Representative Men*, however, but *On Heroes*.

Bacon and Cousin, like many others to whose works Emerson turned throughout his life, represent a kind of proximity that I will call 'intellectual proximity,' but they lack a second element of proximity that incurs anxiety: temporal proximity. Temporal proximity is that quality to which Robert Weisbuch refers in *Atlantic Double-Cross* (1986) when he describes how contemporaries 'matter most' to writers like Emerson (16). Emerson's contemporaries are those who are 'crowding his books off the stalls in New York,' and 'crowding his own potential idea out of his dominated brain' (xv). Emerson will admit as much of Coleridge and Wordsworth in his journal in 1836, when he lists them alongside Southey as modern writers whose spirit 'diffuses itself into pulpits & parliaments & magazines & newspapers' (*JMN* 5:202).

Temporal proximity exacerbates and intensifies the anxiety-inducing nature of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's intellectual proximity, that to which Weisbuch's statements also refer, albeit obliquely. The intellectual work of these

[3] Van Cromphout's essay "Emerson and the Dialectics of History" (1976) explores at length the relationship between Emerson's conception of history, Cousin's, and Hegel's.

writers is certainly crowding Emerson's own ideas out of his head, and what renders this crowding particularly anxiety-inducing is that Emerson's mind is being flooded with ideas he *recognises*. It is this quality that David Greenham identifies, for example, in his own recent transatlantic exploration of Emerson's works, *Emerson's Transatlantic Transcendentalism* (2012), noting of Emerson's first encounter with Coleridge's thought in *Aids to Reflection* that 'it must have come as less of a surprise and more with a shock of recognition' (36). Emerson himself acknowledges this quality in great writing generally, in a now infamous passage from the essay "Self-Reliance":

> A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind within, more than a lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognise our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. (*CW* 2:27)

In *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes*, and in Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's works more generally, Emerson recognises his own rejected thoughts reflected back at him.

One can best understand Emerson's antagonistic engagements in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* with *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes* respectively, to issue from Emerson's identification of threatening proximity of both thought and of time. Emerson has many contemporaries and there are many thinkers with whom he is intellectually proximate. There are few, however, who coalesce both elements, and thus few whose creative presence is threatening enough to necessitate antagonistic

engagement and detachment. In these three instances, Emerson's detachment is one not only from the transatlantic text with which he engages but also a symbolic detachment from the more significant and threatening influence that the intellectually and temporally proximate authors of the texts wield over Emerson both intellectually and creatively.

Identifiable in such an interpretation of Emerson's thematic and formal detachments is the inimitable presence of Harold Bloom and his ideas regarding the anxiety of influence. Specifically, the notion of a detachment that issues from an unconscious need to distinguish one's self from the influence of a precursor has an apparent corollary in one of Bloom's six revisionary ratios, *clinamen*. However, the struggle with the power of the poetic precursor that Bloom describes in *The Anxiety of Influence* is one with what Michael Macovski describes as a 'more distant, psychodynamic antecedent' (*Dialogue and Literature* 43). For Bloom, the further removed temporally the poet is from the poetic precursor, the more potent the precursor's anxiety-inducing effects; temporal distance endows the poetic antecedent with almost mythical proportions as he or she looms over the present from the depths of literary history. As such, the following chapters, which explore Emerson's transatlantic engagement with the works of three contemporary or near-contemporary literary figures, and which understand this temporal proximity to be an exacerbating factor in regard to Emerson's creative anxieties both personal and extrapersonal, are necessarily distinguished from Bloom's framework.

Additionally, although the notion of a detachment from a source of creative and intellectual influence shares conceptual similarities with Bloom's notion of a swerve or *clinamen*, the term detachment, as well as my understanding of its

significance as an act related to reading and to expression, derives directly from Emerson's own writing. The following section outlines Emerson's understanding of detachment as expressed in early essays such as "Self-Reliance" and "Circles," as well as later works like the 1859 lecture "Quotation and Originality," and demonstrates Emerson's situation of this act within a larger process of antagonistic engagement. Emerson develops this process in order to navigate and to define the relationship between influence and originality, which we might also understand as the relationship between reading and writing, indebtedness and self-reliance. Before undertaking a discussion of Emerson's conception of reading, writing, and the relationship between the two, however, it is important to note a final and significant distinction from Harold Bloom's influence theory, referred to briefly above in regard to ideas of nation.

Like Joel Pace and Matthew Scott, I believe Bloom's theory of influence requires augmentation on the grounds that influence cannot be understood solely as a literary matter (3). Rather than explore influence in relation to the cultural contexts that inform American allusion and reference to British writing, as Pace, Scott, and their contributors to *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture* (2005) do, however, the subsequent three chapters incorporate ideas of nation. The following comparative explorations are guided by the fundamental notion of Stephen Spender's *Love-Hate Relations* (1974), later augmented by scholars like Robert Weisbuch, that American writers formed the identity of their 'patria' by

> …comparing their idea of European civilization with their own country's force and vitality. They either reacted against Europe or they gravitated

> toward it, but the shadow image of England and Europe qualified their attitudes to their own country and state of culture. (Spender xxvii)

Robert Weisbuch's *Atlantic Double-Cross* (1986) gave name to Spender's 'shadow image' looming over American writers in the nineteenth century specifically, calling it the 'burden of Britain,' and it is to his account of Anglo-American literary relations to which the following chapters are most indebted.

In Weisbuch's understanding of the burden of Britain, American writers not only construct their identity in comparison to British cultural models, but they do so on temporal grounds. American writers, according to Weisbuch, 'redefine the very meaning of history and society' because, in comparison to Britain, their closest and most anxiety-inducing model, they lack a sufficiently full history (xiii). Deliberately avoiding the language of cause and effect, Weisbuch suggests that 'in the course of their rethinkings,' those necessitated by accusations of and anxiety regarding their apparent lack, American writers either developed his own sense of history or 'an answering substitute for one' (xv).

Like Weisbuch, I do not wish to draw any connection between Emerson's 'rethinkings' of time in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* addressed in each chapter and broader Anglo-American relations. Rather, I intend to acknowledge that Emerson's engagements with *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes* are undoubtedly 'more than personal and individual' (21). That is not to say that the extrapersonal or national significance that these texts and their authors represent override their personal, creative significance, only that the two sources of influence are present and consequential. In short, it is not only because the writers are temporally and intellectually proximate that Emerson engages

antagonistically with the work of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Carlyle, but also because they are British. Emerson himself acknowledges the significance of their nationally representative nature in 1837, when he writes in his journal 'Carlyle and Wordsworth now act out England on us, – Coleridge also' (*JMN* 5:370)

In *Atlantic Double-Cross*, Weisbuch identifies two basic responses in nineteenth century American literature to the 'British taunt of no history' (153–154). American writers could either argue that America possessed a rich past or they could 'argue that a sense of history could be replaced, and decisively improved upon, by considering the entire issue of man-in-time in ways that avoided the linear, secular trail of the past' (153). Emerson's accounts of time in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* fall into the second category. More specifically, Emerson combines two specific strategies of temporal reimagining identified by Weisbuch in *Atlantic Double-Cross*, vertical time and futurism, both of which will be delineated in greater detail in each chapter, and he does so in an increasingly sophisticated and effective manner.

Each of the following chapters acknowledges and incorporates a discussion of the national implications of Emerson's temporal (re)vision in their concluding comments; however, the comparative explorations on which the chapters centre issue from a fundamental assumption: that Emerson engages in each instance with a single, specific British text. More specifically, I argue, Emerson's texts in a sense issue from that engagement, the nature of which is outlined in the following pages.

Reception, Use, and Creation through Detachment: Emerson and Tripartite 'Creative Reading'

The first philosophy that Emerson establishes in *Nature* centres on his engagement with Coleridge's account of transcendence in *Aids to Reflection* as a passage from unconscious thought to consciousness through reflection, the distinctions between the Reason and the Understanding and between Nature and Spirit on which Coleridge's account is grounded, and Coleridge's presentation of this account as a method rather than a system.

In the "Woodnotes" poems, Emerson engages with Wordsworth's conception of the relationship between 'Man, Nature, and Society' as presented in *The Excursion*, and the manner in which the dramatic element in Wordsworth's poem plays a constitutive role in the text's conception of this triad (*The Excursion* ii). Additionally, Emerson engages with the creative subtext of Wordsworth's poem, the ideas presented in the text regarding the development of the poetic imagination; such ideas are at the heart of poems like the Intimations Ode, but are not as overtly manifest in *The Excursion*. Finally, Emerson centres "Woodnotes I" on a relationship similar to that found in Wordsworth's poem between Poet and Wanderer.

In *Representative Men,* Emerson engages with Thomas Carlyle's biographical understanding of history, and specifically with the notion of hero-worship central to this conception. Emerson incorporates a Carlylean understanding of history as biography and of the biography of great men more specifically, and he accomplishes this by presenting history as a series of heroic biographical vignettes as Carlyle does in *On Heroes*. Lastly, Emerson includes among his historical portraits

the figures of Napoleon Bonaparte and William Shakespeare, incorporating two of the great men also found in Carlyle's earlier work.

In part, the following chapters seek to delineate and to explore Emerson's indebtedness to Romantic tradition in these three instances of transatlantic engagement. As such, each chapter contains an exploration of the apparent influence in *Nature* of Coleridge's spiritual philosophy; traces in the "Woodnotes" poems of Wordsworth's revised conception of the Romantic triad; and the indebtedness of the account of history found in *Representative Men* to Carlyle's in *On Heroes*.[4] In this way, the following comparative explorations are aligned with much of the most recent transatlantic scholarship of Emerson's works, namely Patrick Keane's *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason* (2005), David Greenham's *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism* (2012), and Samantha Harvey's *Transatlantic Transcendentalism* (2013). Each of these texts seeks to illuminate more fully the traces of Romantic influence across Emerson's oeuvre and they have been indispensable in my own explorations of Emerson's transatlantic engagements. However, Samantha Harvey's was particularly influential to the development of my approach to Emerson's transatlantic engagement.

Harvey's research in *Transatlantic Transcendentalism*, which focuses specifically on Emerson's engagement with Coleridge's works and ideas, understands Emerson's interactions with Coleridge to constitute a new 'category of influence' that she deems 'assimilative' (9). Informed by Thomas McFarland's

[4] My use of the term 'Romantic triad' is indebted to Samantha Harvey's research in *Transatlantic Transcendentalism* (2013) which, in turn, belongs to a scholastic lineage that includes M.H. Abrams, Thomas McFarland, Seamus Perry, and John Beer (16). Harvey defines the triad as follows: '…a triangle in which the bottom two feet represent the natural world and the human world, and the top point represents the realm of the spiritual' (14). At the centre of Harvey's triad is the figure of the poet-prophet (Ibid).

'originality paradox,' Harvey's understanding of Emerson's assimilative relationship to Coleridge's works and her exploration of that relationship demonstrate the extent to which 'profound indebtedness can enable, and even enhance the originality of a writer' (3). Harvey's understanding of Emerson's assimilative practice, like my own study, also turns to Emerson's own writing on the relationship between the influence wielded by tradition and the potential for original expression. The title of an 1859 lecture dedicated to the subject characterises this relationship as that between "Quotation and Originality," and Harvey quotes from this text in establishing her understanding of Emerson's assimilative approach to Coleridge's works. In the central passage from Emerson's essay to which Harvey turns, Emerson refers explicitly to the British writer:

> Original power in men is usually accompanied with assimilating power: and I value in Coleridge his excellent knowledge & quotations, perhaps as much, possibly more, than his original suggestions. If you give me just distinctions, if you give me inspiring lessons, imaginative poetry, – it is not important to me whose they are. If I possess them, & am fired & guided by them, I know you as a benefactor, & shall return to you as long as you serve me so well. I may like well to know what is Plato's, & what is Goethe's part, & what thought was always dear to you: but their very worth consists in their radiancy, & equal fitness to all intelligence. They fit all my facts like a charm. I respect myself (the more) that I know them. Next to the originator of a good sentence is the first quoter of it. (*JMN* 16:67; quoted Harvey 9)

Such a passage might be read as a justification of plagiarism or as a denial of influence, Harvey concedes; but she points readers to Emerson's comments

regarding possession, guidance, and benefactorship as 'complicat[ing] such reductive models' of reading (Ibid). For Harvey, this passage, alongside an extract from Emerson's "Divinity School Address," portrays Emerson's 'self-assessment of profound indebtedness to Coleridge,' that which 'at the same time galvanized great originality' (10). More specifically, 'Coleridge's fragmentary oeuvre begged an imaginative completion' in the eyes of the American writer, 'much as ruin prompted an imagined vision of the whole' (Ibid).

The assimilative practices Harvey outlines in *Transatlantic Transcendentalism* to illuminate and define Emerson's relationship to Coleridge's works and thought throughout his career, correspond to Emerson's engagements with *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes* in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* specifically. As outlined previously, in each instance Emerson assimilates or incorporates aspects of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's thought into his texts. An exploration of these assimilations in relation to the larger systems of thought in which they are found – conceptions of the Romantic triad in *Nature* and the "Woodnotes" poems, and a system of history in *Representative Men* – reveals that Emerson's indebtedness does not preclude his intellectual originality and suggest the applicability of Harvey's assimilative model more broadly than to the American writer's engagements with Coleridge alone. In the "Woodnotes" poems and *Representative Men*, as well as in *Nature*, Emerson not only assimilates key ideas from Carlyle's, Wordsworth's, and Coleridge's thought, but he then 'applie[s] those ideas in distinctive and original ways' (Harvey 9).

The following three chapters explore in greater detail the manner in which Emerson applies these ideas in an original manner in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* through acts of detachment. Augmenting extant research of Emerson's transatlantic engagements, each of the following comparative explorations incorporate analysis of these acts as they are expressed in both thematic and stylistic shifts in Emerson's three texts.

In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge proceeds from the belief that 'the CHRISTIAN FAITH (*in which I include every article of belief and doctrine professed by the first Reformers in common*) IS THE PERFECTION OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE' (*AR* 6; original emphasis). Furthermore, Coleridge proposes an account of transcendence in which the individual's relationship to God is mediated by the Bible. By way of contrast, prior to composing *Nature*, Emerson had abandoned the Bible as a source of revelation in favour of the Book of Nature, a shift that David Greenham explores extensively in *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism* and which will be discussed in further detail in chapter one. Part of Emerson's detachment from the influence wielded by *Aids to Reflection* and from Coleridge's intellectual and creative influence is the American writer's substitution of the revelatory value of scripture for that of a new text: the book of nature. In incorporating this ideological shift into his expression of the first philosophy in *Nature*, Emerson first embraces the fundamental distinction between the natural and the spiritual at the heart of Coleridge's thought, only to blur the division between this universal opposition in the final two chapters of the essay. Emerson's significant thematic detachment is accompanied by a stylistic shift in these chapters from the numbered sequences that characterise the rest of the text, those that emulate the more structured

philosophical prose of *Aids to Reflection*. Embracing a more fluid and imaginative prose, it is in these chapters that, in Barbara Packer's words, Emerson 'first really becomes "Emerson"' (63).

Emerson's departure from Wordsworth's thought in the "Woodnotes" poems centres on the significant role that community plays in the establishment, maintenance, and renewal of the individual's faith in Wordsworth's poem and throughout Wordsworth's oeuvre. Emerson's rejection of this element of Wordsworth's thought involves an engagement with and eventual detachment from formal properties of Wordsworth's poem, namely the constitutive dramatic element in *The Excursion*.

In regard to the coincident stylistic and ideological detachments seen in *Nature* and the "Woodnotes" poems, *Representative Men* stands as somewhat of anomaly. There is no single prominent volta in *Representative Men* signalling Emerson's detachment from Carlyle's ideas or from formal elements of *On Heroes*. As aforementioned, there are shifts in each chapter comprising *Representative Men*, and in each instance they signal a departure from Carlyle's thought, namely the notion that great men are exemplars to be emulated and worshipped. However, Emerson's genuine detachment from Carlyle's ideas of history is more thoroughly incorporated into *Representative Men* because this detachment is thoroughly embedded in Emerson's conceptualisation of history. Emerson's fundamental disagreement with Carlyle stems from Carlyle's insistence on hero-worship and leads to Emerson's detachment from *On Heroes* on multiple grounds: the definition of biography, the manner in which history moves or progresses, and the current trajectory of this historical movement. Emerson's detachment from

Carlyle is located in Emerson's entirely distinct model of history, unique despite the fact that its biographical foundations are located in Carlyle's thought, and despite superficial formal similarities between Emerson's text and *On Heroes*.

In each instance, Emerson's detachment centres on his rejection of elements in Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's thought that are counter to his emphasis on self-reliance, a notion conveyed most concisely by the epigraph to his 1841 essay dedicated to the subject: '*Ne te quaesiveris extra*' (seek nothing outside yourself) (*CW* 2:27). In *Aids to Reflection*, it is the mediating presence of the Bible and the rigid opposition of nature and spirit that unnecessarily mediates man's self-reliant relationship to God and to the world around him; it is the intrusion of community on the individual's experience of nature that Emerson rejects in the "Woodnotes" poems; and in *Representative Men*, Emerson departs from Carlyle's thought on the grounds that its calls for idolatry are antithetical to Emerson's idea of self-reliance.

Complicating Emerson's calls for radical subjectivity or self-reliance not only in these three texts but in all aspects of Emerson's expression, is his indebtedness to ideas that are outside of himself. In a number of his works such as the "American Scholar Address" (1837) and in essays from Emerson's *First Series* (1841), most notably in "Self-Reliance" and "Circles," Emerson acknowledges and explores this tension, which we might call that between indebtedness and self-reliance, in relation to the notions of expression and the intellect. In this context, this tension is best expressed as that between reading and writing or, as in the title of Emerson's aforementioned 1859 lecture, a tension between "Quotation and Originality." In such works, Emerson not only acknowledges and explores tensions between the

incursions of tradition and original expression, he attempts to find a balance between the two oppositional or antithetical ideas. As will be explored in further detail in forthcoming pages, through his explorations Emerson succeeds in developing a model in which tradition and its influence do not disappear altogether, but rather one in which the presence of the past does not eliminate the possibility for future originality.

The notion that original expression can be achieved through acts of assimilation – that is to say, the notion that original expression can be achieved by applying assimilated ideas in new and original ways – explains in broad strokes the model that Emerson develops. However, the manner in which Emerson imagines influence and self-reliance to co-exist is more complicated, and assimilation is only the first step in a larger process I will refer to throughout this thesis as creative or antagonistic reading. In short, and prefacing a far more in-depth exploration of creative reading, assimilation must be followed by a second act, detachment, in which one moves away from or gains independence from the idea with which one engages. Augmenting extant transatlantic scholarship of Emerson's works, the following chapters focus not only on evidence in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* of Emerson's indebtedness to the three British sources with which he engages, but also the elements of Emerson's thought that are distinct from these sources, reading these distinguishing features in relation to ideas of detachment.

Creative Reading

Emerson's 1837 American Scholar Address focuses centrally on the relationship between influence and originality presented in the manner in which Emerson would continue to describe it for the rest of his career: tradition (influence) on one side and future independence from tradition (originality) on the other. Featuring significantly in the address is Emerson's exploration of scholarship and, by extension, reading, as a matter of contending with tradition. Emerson presents a fundamentally antagonistic account of reading centred on the opposition between the individual intellect and the incursive force of tradition. In exploring these topics, he presents a brief but significant account of the relationship between reading and expression as he understands it in the early years of his literary career:

> I would not be hurried by any love of system, by any exaggeration of instincts, to underrate the Book. We all know that as the human body can be nourished on any food, though it were boiled grass and the broth of shoes, so the human mind can be fed by any knowledge. And great and heroic men have existed who had almost no other information than by the printed page. I only would say that it needs a strong head to bear that diet. One must be an inventor to read well. As the proverb says, "He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry out the wealth of the Indies." There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world. We then

> see, what is always true, that as the seer's hour of vision is short and rare among heavy days and months, so is its record, perchance, the least part of his volume. The discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakespeare, only that least part,— only the authentic utterances of the oracle;—all the rest he rejects, were it never so many times Plato's and Shakespeare's. (*CW* 1:58)

Describing books in terms of mental nourishment, the highest form of reading - creative reading - is nourishing only insofar as it is an active form of engagement. Through this active engagement a text's manifold allusions can be identified and, most importantly, through such an act the most significant portions of a text – those parts that are 'the authentic utterances of the oracle' - might be discerned. Commenting on Emerson's tendency to present reading in this manner, Barbara Packer notes that

> The assertion that a text reveals a meaning its author did not consciously intend (whether of unwitting folly or oracular wisdom) is the constitutive gesture of interpretation. For it turns the text into a figure of which our explanation is the fulfillment, and hence is not the least powerful of the counterattacks we launch at the centuries.... (21)

When Emerson's account of reading in the American Scholar Address is understood in this light as a counterattack levelled at tradition or, at the very least, a defensive posture, we begin to see the foundations of the antagonistic relationship between influence and originality, past and future, that Emerson will develop over the next several years, particularly in the essays of the *First Series* (1841). However, in 1837, Emerson conceives of creative reading and creative writing as distinct albeit similar acts. Crucially, Emerson's fully developed understanding of the relationship

between past and future, influence and originality, reading and writing, posits a process of engagement in which writing *is* creative reading. That is to say, Emerson imagines a process by which reading leads to creation (is creative), a process that is reflected in his own engagements with sources of particularly potent influence like *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes*.

One of the central features of creative reading, antagonism, has been noted several times previously. Creative reading is antagonistic because it centres on what Emerson understands to be the fundamentally oppositional relationship between influence and self-reliance – that which is already expressed (the past; that which influences) and that which is yet to be expressed (original thought; future creation). In his own study of Emerson's ideas of reading and of writing in “Being Odd, Getting Even” (1985), Stanley Cavell calls the reader's attention to this very quality through analysis of Emerson statement in the essay "Self-Reliance" that ‘Self-reliance is the aversion of [conformity]’ (quoted "Being Odd" 113). Of this statement Cavell writes,

> This almost says, and nearly means, that you find your existence in conversion, by converting to it, that thinking is a kind of turning oneself around. But what it directly says is that the world of conformity must turn from what he [Emerson] says as he must turn from it, and that since the process is never over while we live – since, that is, we are never finally free of one another – his reader's life with him will be turning from, and returning from, his words, moving on from them, by them. In the later, major essay "Fate" Emerson calls this aversion "antagonism" - "Man is a stupendous antagonism"…. (113–114)

What Cavell identifies in this instance is the intimate relationship between the notions of self-reliance and antagonism not only in "Self-Reliance" but in the conceptions of reading and of writing presented throughout Emerson's oeuvre. To be self-reliant is to turn away or against that which would tempt you toward conformity. More accurately, to be self-reliant is to be *consistently* turning away or against conformity. The repetitive nature of this turning away, the notion that the achievement of self-reliance is, in Cavell's words, a 'continuing task not a property,' is the second element central to Emerson's conception of reading and of its relationship to expression (Cavell "Being Odd" 103).

In a passage from "Circles," an essay that is found, like "Self-Reliance", in Emerson's *First Series* (1841), Emerson explicitly describes the intertwined nature of antagonism and repetition, and their relationship to acts of expression:

> Every ultimate fact is only the first of a new series. Every general law only a particular fact of some more general law presently to disclose itself. There is no outside, no inclosing wall, no circumference to us. The man finishes his story,—how good! how final! how it puts a new face on all things! He fills the sky. Lo! on the other side rises also a man and draws a circle around the circle we had just pronounced the outline of the sphere. Then already is our first speaker not man, but only a first speaker. His only redress is forthwith to draw a circle outside of his antagonist. (*CW* 2:181)

Using the image of the circle, that 'highest emblem in the cipher of the world' to which he would return time and again throughout his career, Emerson presents both reading and expression as acts akin to the expansion of an infinite number of circumferences (*CW* 2:179). For Emerson, nothing is final in either self-reliant

expression or in its corollary, self-reliant reading. Just as soon as the individual believes himself to have reached the absolute limits of thought, whether in his own expression or in reading those ideas that others have expressed, a new circle is drawn that moves intellectual boundaries ever further. Self-reliance in reading and in expression, then, is not only an antagonistic 'turning from' in order to draw a new circle outside of one's antagonist, but also a recognition of the fact that no new circumference is final.

Emerson's emphasis on the constant movement that comes with the drawing of new circumferences does speak to a certain kind of poverty attendant with the notion that one's position is never final, that we are always leaving (Cavell "Thinking of Emerson" 176). However, it is also in this quality of transition or movement that Emerson identifies an influx of power:

> Power ceases in the instant of repose, it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one fact the world hates, that the soul *becomes*; for that forever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, all reputation to shame, confounds the saint with the rogue, shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside. (*CW* 2:40; original emphasis)

This empowerment is originality of being, and the act that it facilitates – although only in those in possession of genius – is expression. Thus, through antagonistic opposition to the past and by recognition of the necessity for constant movement, creative reading or expression is made possible. However, while fundamental, these elements do not describe how the movement from antagonistic opposition to creation actually occurs. In sketching the particulars of the method by which an

influx of power can be gained through the act of creative reading I will turn to an 1859 lecture in which Emerson's ideas on the subject coalesce in a concise expression of this act.

The title of Emerson's 1859 lecture, "Quotation and Originality," presents an antagonistic relationship between two concepts or ideas through a set of oppositional terms.[5] The creative or expressive emphasis of these terms necessarily incorporates acts of reading, as it is only through one's antagonistic engagement with an incursive force (reading) that creative impulses (writing) can be inspired. "Quotation and Originality," originally delivered at Freeman Place Chapel in Boston in March 1859, is dedicated to outlining the process by which the transfer of power from incursive force to expression is achieved. That is to say, the lecture is dedicated to the process of creative reading.

Emerson's understanding of creative reading in "Quotation and Originality" is founded on the notion that the past is nothing more than 'raw material' for 'recomposition,' and the process by which this transformation occurs, in its most basic conception, is tripartite:

> This vast memory is only raw material. The divine gift is ever the instant life which *receives* and *uses* and *creates*, and can well bury the old in the omnipotency [sic] with which Nature composes all her harvests for recomposition. (*CW* 8:107; emphasis added)

[5] Like Julie Ellison, I have avoided the use of the term 'dialectic' when describing the antagonistic relationship between reading and writing, influx and expression. In *Emerson's Romantic Style*, Ellison suggests that while Emerson's ideas are often described in terms of dialectical unity, such a conception ignores the fact that resolutions of polarity in Emerson's works are only ever temporary and that '[w]hen antitheses do issue in synthesis, it rarely endures…' (76). Emerson's conception of creative reading, as aforementioned, emphasises the necessity of perpetual motion; to unify oppositional elements is to stagnate and, as such, must necessarily only ever be temporary.

Beginning with a period of reception to a text, creative reading then requires engagement with or use of that which one has received. Although not explicit in the above quotation, which presents the process of creative reading in only a rudimentary outline, it is the act of use or engagement that facilitates the final, crucial step in the process, creation. While creation is straightforward in its correspondence to an act or acts of expression, the process by which one achieves this – that is, the nature of reception and use – require further exploration.

We might understand reception either in the manner of Stanley Cavell in his essay "Being Odd, Getting Even" as an act of 'obedience' and a 'mode of listening,' or like Julie Ellison in *Emerson's Romantic Style* (1984), as a 'surrender' to that which 'invades the reader's territory and evicts him from it' (111; 78). For Ellison, reading involves a violent incursion from which one must then recover, while for Cavell, to receive a text and to be received by it 'is to find thinking in it. That would prove a human existence is authorized in it' ("Being Odd" 113).

The manner in which Emerson conceives of reception is not necessarily consistent throughout his works. Throughout her exploration of Emerson's prose works, Ellison notes a preponderance of violent language and grotesque imagery, coupled with equally violent stylistic transitions that she links to the 'association between interpretation and violence' (92). When Emerson writes 'We thrive by casualties. Our chief experiences have been casual,' Ellison takes him to mean that 'we thrive by inflicting casualties,' and that this violence 'is always a recovery from a prior debility' (13).

Elsewhere in Emerson's oeuvre one finds more innocuous accounts of reception, however. The aforementioned description of reading in "Self-Reliance"

as an act that involves recognising our rejected thoughts reflected back at us with alienated majesty, for example, exemplifies Cavell's more organic understanding of what I call reception. Elsewhere, too, as we will see in the following pages, Emerson aligns reception as a process of self-identification and a sanctioning of one's genius, rather than an act of violence.

Whether reception is an act of violent incursion against which one must defend or a more organic, authorizing act, is beyond the scope of this discussion. What is significant is the fact that, in either case, reception must be understood fundamentally as an act of influx. That is to say, reception is influence in the most fundamental sense of the word – a flowing in of something from outside. Additionally, whether or not influence imposes itself violently, its effects require nullification, and self-reliance must be asserted. It is for exactly this reason that Emerson develops his understanding of creative reading – because, as we have noted earlier, the relationship between the influence of tradition on one side and the power of original thought and expression on the other is fundamentally antagonistic.

Emerson's aforementioned portrayal of reading as a recognition of one's own thoughts in works of genius should be understood at least in part as an expression of his desire to nullify the effects of influence. It appears not only in "Self-Reliance," but also in the American Scholar Address in Emerson's description of heroes and poets as those in whom individuals 'behold…their own green and crude being, - ripened!' (*CW* 1:65), and in his descriptions of Marvell's, Chaucer's, and Dryden's works as those in which the poet expresses 'that which lies close to my own soul, that which I had also well-nigh thought and said' (*CW* 1:57–58).

Although such descriptions of reading and of great writing grant genius to others, they also simultaneously sanction one's self-reliance; Emerson manages to transform the accomplishments of others into a reinforcement of the reader's individual greatness and potential. A more concrete path toward the nullification of influence, however, is outlined in Emerson's understanding of the second step in the tripartite process of creative reading, use, to be discussed in the forthcoming and concluding portion of this discussion.

Use itself is not a concrete act; rather, this intermediate step in the process of creative reading is a state of transition, one in which a crucial act of transformation or recomposition occurs. It is perhaps best to think of use as a conversion of the raw material of the past into something new albeit still connected to that which came before. In the opening paragraphs of "Quotation and Originality," Emerson presents this conversion of raw material in terms of weaving:

> 'Our debt to tradition through reading and conversation is so massive … that, in a large sense, one would say there is no pure originality. All minds quote. Old and new make the warp and woof of every moment. There is no thread that is not a twist of these two strands. By necessity, by proclivity and by delight, we all quote. (*CW* 8:94)

The image of a thread formed by the twisting of two separate strands emphasises a notion integral to Emerson's understanding of creative reading, namely, that engagement or use enables the creation of something paradoxically both new and indebted – a thread that is more than the sum of its parts. This process is perhaps most vividly conveyed in Emerson's use of consumptive and digestive metaphors in his 1859 lecture. In one instance, for example, Emerson refers to our indebtedness

to the past as being 'fed and formed' by tradition. In addition to presenting the raw material of the past as a kind of intellectual food, Emerson refers to instances in which this might be transformed into a substance that empowers expression through a digestive process of sorts. Perhaps the most revealing passage of this kind is found toward the conclusion of Emerson's lecture; it indicates not only the significance of Emerson's consumptive and ingestive metaphors, but also their relationship to self-reliant originality:

> But there remains the indefeasible [sic] persistency of the individual to be himself. One leaf, one blade of grass, one meridian, does not resemble another. Every mind is different; and the more it is unfolded, the more pronounced is that difference. He must draw the elements into him for food, and, if they be granite and silex, will prefer them cooked by sun and rain, by time and art, to his hand. But, however received, these elements pass into the substance of his constitution, will be assimilated, and tend always to form, not a partisan, but a possessor of truth (*CW* 8:105)

Beginning with an overt appeal to the notion of self-reliant individualism, Emerson elaborates further on the medial step in creative reading, use, aligning it with biological conversion. In this process, ingestion (influence) is necessarily followed by a transformative process in which a material's most vital elements – what we might understand in this metaphor as ideas – are absorbed or 'passed into the substance of one's constitution.' In biological terms, this is a process of digestion by which raw material of the past, intellectual food, is converted into energy that empowers acts of creation. Following this process, the individual is indebted to the original raw material that he or she consumed, but only insofar as it provides him or

her with the energy to perform original actions. In this instance, the original act with which Emerson is chiefly concerned is that of expression.

The notion of absorption or assimilation is that on which Samantha Harvey builds her aforementioned understanding of Emerson's assimilative engagements with Coleridge's works and ideas. Linking this assimilation directly to notions of expression, Harvey defines the act as one in which 'Emerson assimilated key aspects of Coleridge's thought and then applied those ideas in distinctive and original ways' (9). In the main passage from "Quotation and Originality" to which Harvey turns in establishing her understanding of Emerson's assimilative practices, and that to which I have previously referred, however, it is important note the distinction between what Emerson calls 'original power' and 'assimilating power' ('Original power in men is usually accompanied with assimilating power….'). Elsewhere in the lecture, Emerson similarly distinguishes between these powers when he writes that 'We expect a great man to be a good reader; or in proportion to the spontaneous power should be the assimilating power' (*CW* 8:93).

In Emerson's definition of a 'good reader' as one whose 'spontaneous power' is in proportion to that of his or her 'assimilating power,' spontaneous power is best understood as that which corresponds to what Stanley Cavell calls whim and explores in "Being Odd, Getting Even." In Cavell's essay, the significance of the term whim is derived from in its appearance in a curious passage from "Self-Reliance" in which Emerson writes 'I shun father and mother and wife and brother when my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels of the door-post, *Whim*' (*CW* 2:30; original emphasis). Cavell understands this statement to mean that

> Whether [Emerson's] writing on the lintels – his writing as such, I gather – is thought of as having the constancy of the contents of a mezuzah or the emergency of the Passover blood, either way he is taking upon himself the mark of God, and of departure. His perception of the moment is taken in hope, as something to be proven only on the way, *by* the way. This departure, such setting out is, in our poverty, what hope consists in, all there is to hope for; it is the abandoning of despair, which is otherwise our condition. ("Thinking of Emerson" 175; original emphasis)

That is to say, the power and act of assimilation must be accompanied by another power and by an additional action, a power nearer to intuition or genius that involves an act of moving away or departure – what I refer to as detachment.

At this point, we find ourselves as it were back at the beginning of the process of creative reading we began outlining some pages ago: at the point of transition or movement by which creation is empowered. Tracing Emerson's portrayals of creative reading in greater detail has refined our understanding of the process and demonstrated that while assimilation in part describes the nature of the act or state to which Emerson refers in "Quotation and Originality" as use, it fails to acknowledge a second and equally significant act: detachment. Emerson conveys the multivalent significance of the act of detachment as an empowering act of self-reliance and one requiring the refusal of all outside influence in a passage from "Self-Reliance," and the last to which I will refer in this discussion of creative reading:

> Let a stoic open the resources of man, and tell men they are not leaning willows, but *can and must detach themselves*; that *with the exercise of self-*

> *trust*, *new powers shall appear*; that a man is the word made flesh, born to shed healing to the nations, that he should be ashamed of our compassion, and that *the moment he acts from himself*, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries, and customs out of the window, we pity him no more but thank and revere him, - and that teacher shall restore the life of man to splendor, and make his name dear to all History. (*CW* 2:43–44; emphasis added)

The following chapters consider Emerson's shifts, both thematic and stylistic, away from *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes* respectively to be expressions of this detachment – of tossing out the books and the intellectual idolatries that once overwhelmed Emerson's self-reliance. In doing so, discussion in each chapter roughly corresponds to the process of creative reading outlined above. Each of the following three chapters opens with a discussion of reception, that is, Emerson's affinity to various aspects of Coleridge's, Wordsworth's, and Carlyle's thought generally, and in *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *Representative Men* specifically. The discussion of reception in chapter one is lengthier than those found in chapters two and three because it incorporates an exploration of significant intellectual and spiritual developments in the period leading up to and during Emerson's first encounters with the works of all three writers. Comparative analysis of the two texts on which each chapter centres, traces the elements of Emerson's texts indebted to the transatlantic sources with which he engages – that is to say, it traces Emerson's assimilations. Each discussion also contains an extensive exploration of Emerson's detachments from these ideas, each of which centres on ideas of self-reliance, as aforementioned. In *Nature* and the "Woodnotes" poems, Emerson's thematic detachments coincide with an abrupt stylistic shift that is

interpreted as a creative product of Emerson's assertion of intellectual independence. *Representative Men* differs somewhat in the manner of its detachment, and the significance of these differences will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion to this thesis. However, while distinct, *Representative Men* follows a similar pattern of assimilation and detachment to that found in *Nature* and the "Woodnotes" poems. Finally, as noted above, each chapter concludes with a discussion of the national significance of Emerson's temporal reimaginings in each of his texts; those that coincide with and attend his creative and intellectual detachments.

Emerson's *Nature* and Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*

1

In the preceding pages, I positioned the significance of Emerson's respective interactions in *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* with *Aids to Reflection*, *The Excursion*, and *On Heroes* in two ways. Firstly, Emerson's engagements in these three instances were positioned in relation to his desire for personal independence from the creative and intellectual influence wielded by sources proximate in both time and in the quality of their thought. Secondly, I suggested that Emerson's engagements were guided by a desire to distinguish himself as an American writer from the spectre of British influence represented by three sources whose reach across the Atlantic was particularly strong. The following chapter explores in greater detail this doubled significance in relation to Emerson's engagement in *Nature* with Coleridge's influence through his interaction with *Aids to Reflection*.

The ensuing discussion roughly follows the tripartite process of intellectual engagement traced in the introduction – reception, use, and creation – opening with a brief exploration of Emerson's intellectual development prior to and during the composition of *Nature*. The intellectual events leading up to and during Emerson's composition of the essay contextualise his intellectual proximity to Coleridge's thought in the years immediately preceding the publication of *Nature*.

That is to say this portion of the chapter explores Emerson's receptivity to and subsequent reception of the themes, method, and structure found in *Aids to Reflection*, those elements which are eventually incorporated into *Nature*.

As noted previously, use as an intellectual act involves not only assimilation (and possession through assimilation) but detachment. As such, the second portion of this chapter – that which concerns Emerson's use in *Nature* of Coleridge's thought, method, and style found in *Aids to Reflection* – is twofold. To begin, this discussion of use traces those aspects of Coleridge's spiritual thought in *Aids to Reflection* that Emerson incorporates into the first philosophy outlined in *Nature*.

A central element in Emerson's assimilative approach to Coleridge's thought is the incorporation into his Romantic first philosophy of a Coleridgean distinction between the mental faculties of reason and the understanding. This distinction is central to the foundational philosophical premise of Emerson's Romantic thought in *Nature* and one that, again, is indebted to Coleridge's spiritual enquiry in *Aids to Reflection*: an account of Atonement (at-one-ment) based on subjective experience – a transition from unconscious thought to consciousness via the use of the reasoning faculty – and on a process of reflection. Finally, Emerson ostensibly incorporates into *Nature* the rigid distinction between the natural and the spiritual that is central to Coleridge's spiritual philosophy in *Aids to Reflection*.

My use of the term 'ostensibly' presages the second aspect of Emerson's use discussed in this chapter: detachment. Emerson's detachment generally and in *Nature* specifically from Coleridge's later religious thought, centres on Emerson's ultimate inability to embrace the rigid and rigidly defined distinction between the natural and the spiritual on which Coleridge's philosophy in *Aids to Reflection* rests

– that which Emerson appears at first to incorporate into *Nature*. In his essay, Emerson expands the intellectual parameters that define Coleridge's idealism in *Aids to Reflection*, those that confine spiritual enquiry to one fundamental question, 'What is matter?', and which subsequently answer this question by defining matter in its simplest terms as 'a phenomenon, not a substance' (*CW* 1:30, 37). Expanding the horizons of his thought, Emerson asks and attempts to answer in the final two chapters of his essay not only what matter is but also 'Whence is it? and Whereto?' (*CW* 1:38). In his incorporation of new intellectual territories, Emerson collapses the Coleridgean division between matter and spirit that also characterise the first seven chapters of Emerson's essay, and includes within his new circumference of thought the previous Coleridgean boundaries, while also necessarily surpassing them.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the creation that emerges from and is empowered by Emerson's engagement with *Aids to Reflection*. As with the discussion of use that prefaces it, the exploration of creation in this and in subsequent chapters is twofold, incorporating a discussion of creation in relation to both to Emerson's personal and extrapersonal desire for intellectual and creative independence. This concluding section begins with an exploration of Emerson's intellectual departure from Coleridge's thought in relation to personal independence, focusing on the final two chapters of Emerson's essay and their expansion of the intellectual circumferences that define Coleridge's idealism. Although this discussion predominately explores Emerson's departure from Coleridge thematically, it also considers the stylistic features that distinguish these final chapters of Emerson's essay from those prior as a related expression of

Emerson's detachment. Finally, to conclude the discussion of creation is an exploration of the account of the fall contained in the final chapter of Emerson's essay in relation to ideas of nation.

Emerson's Reception of Coleridge: Coleridge in Emerson's Journals

Evidence from Emerson's journals and letters indicate that he first encountered *Aids to Reflection* in 1829, most likely the James Marsh edition of the text that was published the same year. Emerson also read Coleridge's *The Friend* for the first time in 1829, and it appears that Emerson immediately recognised the significance of both of these works. In a letter to his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, in December 1829, Emerson writes of Coleridge's genius in relation to *The Friend*, that '[Coleridge] has a tone a little lower than greatness,' Emerson begins, 'but what a living soul, what a universal knowledge!...' (*Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2:277). In a second letter, again to Mary Moody Emerson and again from December 1829, Emerson is more effusive in his praise of the British writer and of his theological thought specifically:

> I say a man so learned and a man so bold, has a right to be heard, and I will take off my hat the while and not make an impertinent noise. At least I became acquainted with one new mind I never saw before, - acquisition to my knowledge of man not unimportant, when it is remembered that so gregarious are even intellectual men that Aristotle thinks for thousands, and Bacon for his ten thousands, and so, in enumerating the apparently

> manifold philosophies and forms of thought, we should not be able to count more than seven or eight minds. 'Tis the privilege of his independence and of his labour to be counted for one school. His theological speculations are, at least, *God viewed from one position*; and no wise man would neglect that one element in concentrating the rays of human thought to a true and comprehensive conclusion. Then I love him that he is no utilitarian, nor necessarian, nor scoffer, nor *hoc genus omne*, tucked away in the corner of a sentence of Plato. (*L* 7:189)

Patrick Keane calls readers' attention to Emerson's use of the word scoffer and its probable reference to one of Emerson's favourite passages of Coleridge's poetry from *The Destiny of Nations*(62). However, more significant to the following discussion of *Nature* and the influence of *Aids to Reflection* on the text is Emerson's specific praise in the letter for Coleridge's 'theological speculation.' As Frank Thompson notes, such a reference to Coleridge's theology almost certainly refers to the spiritual explorations found in *Aids to Reflection* ("Emerson's Indebtedness" 57).

The following discussion seeks to contextualise Emerson's apparently immediate receptivity to Coleridge's spiritual philosophy as expressed in *Aids to Reflection* upon encountering it in 1829. In order to accomplish this, Emerson's engagement with Coleridge's works will be considered in relation to the American writer's intellectual and spiritual development in the years leading up to his first encounter with *Aids to Reflection*. The following pages demonstrate how Emerson's exposure to German Higher Criticism and to natural history throughout the 1820s incurs significant intellectual and spiritual developments. Emerson's encounters with German Higher Criticism led eventually to his rejection of revealed religion,

and while his subsequent embrace of natural history saw order and unity in the universe, Emerson was left with what David Robinson describes as a 'moral gap' without the Bible for spiritual support (74). Despite the complications that arose in his encounters with both of these schools of thought, Emerson's exposure to both German biblical scholarship and to ideas of natural history greatly inform the conception of the Romantic triad that he would eventually establish in *Nature*. Additionally, his exposure to these ideas poised the American writer to receive and to embrace several elements of Coleridge's philosophy that, in addition to revelatory events during Emerson's European travels, aided in closing this moral gap.

To begin, I will consider Emerson's exposure to and reactions to German higher criticism. Julie Ellison and David Greenham have both considered the significance of this scholarship to Emerson's intellectual development at length in *Emerson's Romantic Style* and *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism* respectively. The following discussion is greatly indebted to their research.

Emerson's Rejection of Revealed Religion: German Higher Criticism & Quantum Sumus Scimus

The higher criticism of German scholars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was a form of biblical scholarship that approached Christian scripture comparatively, demonstrating that it was written not through divine inspiration but by ordinary men (Ellison 44). These scholars compared passages from the Bible to one another, compared and contrasted Biblical narratives with those found in various global mythologies, and 'compared Christian versions of

history with other surviving historical evidence, physical or written' (Ibid). The effect although not necessarily the intent of this scholarship was, as Julie Ellison describes, 'to deprive the Bible of its traditional status by calling into question its historical validity and by challenging the unitary canon' (Ibid).

Emerson encountered German biblical scholarship throughout the mid-1820s in several ways and from various sources. Situating Emerson's exposure to such scholarship in relation to the broader transatlantic currents carrying German thought to New England in the early nineteenth century, David Greenham notes the significance of two American spiritual and intellectual figures in particular, Edward Everett and Nathaniel Frothingham (21).

Everett, a fellow at Harvard's Divinity School and one of Emerson's tutors, had studied the biblical scholarship of Johann Gottfried Eichhorn in Germany in 1815 (Ibid). Though Everett refused to teach the aspects of Eichhorn's scholarship that called into question the accuracy of the Bible at Harvard, Emerson would have experienced Everett's application of Eichhorn's methods to the classics; he taught that 'Homer was not an individual inspired writer but rather the editor of a pre-existing tradition' (Ibid). Nathaniel Frothingam, a Unitarian minister and pastor of Boston's First Church, gave sermons on German Biblical criticism in Boston as early as 1820, and did so to congregations that included Emerson's aunt, Mary Moody Emerson (Ibid).[6] Emerson also would have gained an impression of the cultural atmosphere in which German biblical criticism flourished through his readings of German literature, book reviews, De Stael's *De L'Allemagne*, Carlyle's essays, as well

[6] For more information regarding Mary Moody Emerson's impact on Emerson's intellectual development see Chapter 1 of *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism*, "The Book of Nature," in which David Greenham considers this subject at length and in great detail.

as Coleridge's later prose works (Ellison 43). Perhaps the single most influential source of German higher criticism for Emerson, however, was his brother William who undertook Biblical scholarship in Germany between 1824 and 1825 while studying to become a minister; William subsequently abandoned those designs.

Emerson and his brother exchanged letters during William's time in Germany, several of which reveal William's appeals to Emerson to learn German so that he might study the higher criticism as well.[7] Exploring not only Emerson's correspondence with William during this period, but other records of Emerson's reaction to German higher criticism in his journals and in letters to his Aunt Mary, Greenham traces a change in Emerson's response to such scholarship throughout the mid-1820s (21–23). Although upon his first encounters with these ideas Emerson is resistant to them, by 1827 he has 'all but give[n] up on scripture' as a source of revelation (Greenham 23). The 1827 letter to which Greenham refers in assessing Emerson's eventual rejection of revealed religion is worth noting here, if only briefly:

> To *ask* questions, is what this life is for – to answer them the next. & those intermediate people who, like my correspondent, seem to partake of both. My eyes are not so strong as to let me be learned. I am curious to know what the Scriptures do in very deed say about that exalted person who died on Calvary, but I do think it at this distance of time & in the confusion of languages to be a work of weighting phrases & hunting in dictionaries. A

[7] Both David Greenham and Julie Ellison trace in some detail the nature of William and Waldo Emerson's correspondence during this period (Greenham 21–23; Ellison 43).

> portion of truth bright & sublime lives in every moment in every mind. It is enough for safety tho' not for education. (*L* 1:208)

Although Emerson describes biblical scholarship as a matter of dictionaries and the 'work of weighting phrases,' in this letter to Mary Moody Emerson, he does not disparage the scepticism of the task as much as he weighs the ratio of cost to benefit, finding that the benefits are not worth the expenditure of time and of scholastic capital. Having rejected the legitimacy of revealed religion, Emerson is able to present German biblical scholarship as an entirely intellectual activity rather than an attack on the foundations of faith. For revelation, he places onus on the individual intuition – 'A portion of truth bright & sublime lives in every moment in very mind' – a transformation that Greenham rightly associates with the idea Emerson develops in his published works 'that the authority of the self's own insights should replace the collapsed authority of the Bible' (23).

The theological and intellectual debate in which Emerson and his aunt are clearly engaged in this letter from 1827 is typical of their correspondence throughout the 1820s. In a similar vein are many of the letters exchanged between Emerson and his brother William, particularly those exchanged during William's time in Germany in the mid-1820s. One of Emerson's letters to his brother during this period is particularly revelatory when considered alongside the passage above. In a letter to William in 1824, Emerson had playfully asked 'Why talk you not of my studies, --- how and what I should do? I shall be glad of any useful hints from the paradise of dictionaries and critics.'[8] Writing on the subject of German biblical

[8] Julie Ellison quotes this letter in *Emerson's Romantic Style* (43), but it can also be found with further contextualising detail in James Eliot Cabot's *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1887) (109).

scholarship three years before he would compose to his letter to Mary, Emerson's language echoes that which he will use in his later correspondence although with a significant tonal shift. Emerson's reference to Germany as a scholastic paradise is sarcastic and playful but it is also disparaging. Again, Emerson presents biblical scholarship as a matter of dictionaries and a critical eye, but here such descriptions are prompted by fundamental scepticism of a branch of scholarship that would approach the Bible in this way.

We can best understand Emerson's eventual rejection of revealed religion in relation to his predisposition to self-reliance. Revealed religion is for Emerson an unnecessary interference in and mediation of what he comes to see more clearly throughout the 1820s and 1830s as a personal relationship to God. In Barbara Packer's words, even the 'mild faith' of Unitarianism – the most liberal denomination of Christianity available to the American writer – eventually became 'at once too constricting and too unsatisfying: constricting because it still imposed a weight of traditional forms upon the observer, unsatisfying because it placed all direct contact with the divine in the distant past' (33). In January 1827, some months before the aforementioned letter to his aunt, Emerson recorded in his journal an indictment of revealed religion that, although lengthy, offers significant contextualisation for Emerson's rejection of the Bible as a source of revelation. As such, it is important enough to consider one of its passages in its entirety:

> It is under this persuasion, that we think it a matter of importance to adapt the exercises of public worship to the changing exigences of society. If ethics were an immovable science the primeval altar of the Jews, might serve as the model of our holy place. The positive institutions in which God once

judged it proper to close the moral relations of men would be adequate today & forever. The noble speculations of ancient wisdom, the instructions of Socrates, of Epictetus, & of Cicero, of Seneca had been in vain; & the great institution of Jesus Christ, the just religion which embodied all that was known of the human heart & anticipated in its comprehensive revelations all that has since been known, had been in vain. On the other hand, we see that we are standing on a higher stage; that we are instructed by a better philosophy, whose greater principles explain to us the design whilst they comprehend themselves the petty provisions of the less. ----- We leave the ritual, the offering, & the altar of Moses, we cast off the superstitions that were the swaddling clothes of Christianity, the altercations of novices, the ambition that created a hierarchy, the images & the confession, and would accommodate the instructions of the church to the wants of worshippers. We already discern the broader light blazing before us when we shall have emerged from the porches of the temple & stand in the temple itself, when from the abundance of light the true character of God & man's relations to him shall cease to be partially communicated shrouded up in absurd & monstrous errors with which man's invention hath wrapt them, but shall fall upon the soul like the light of the sun. It is obvious that an hour must arrive in the progress of society, when disputed truths in theology will cease to demand the whole life & genius of ministers in their elucidation but will be admitted on the same footing of acknowledged established fact as are the long contested doctrines of political science at the present day. When the champions of the Cross will

> be able to turn from this ungrateful task in which ages have so unprofitably elapsed of stripping off the manifold coats under which prejudice & falsehood had concealed the truth – and come at last to the dear & lofty employment of pointing out the secret but affecting passages in the history of the Soul. (*JMN* 3:61–62)

To start as it were at the end, Emerson's mention of history to close this passage speaks to what he understands to be central problem with revealed religion, also noted above: its placement of direct contact with God in a distant past. In this instance, Emerson reimagines history altogether, not as the history of thought and belief, as he does in the account of history outlined at the start of the passage, but as the secret – that is to say, the unrevealed, personal – passages of the Soul. In arriving at this conclusion, however, Emerson first establishes all that is wrong with revealed religion and with organised Christianity more generally.

Emerson's central indictment of organised religion, and one that he emphasises through the repeated use of a sartorial metaphor, is the mediating or intervening nature of its central elements. The trappings of nineteenth century Christianity – the ritual, images, offerings, and altars – join distracting human interventions – prejudice, falsehood, and the hierarchy created by ambitions – to dim God's divine light and thus intervene in our perception of it. Although never explicitly, Emerson obliquely notes the unnecessary mediation of scripture on several occasions, namely in his references to the 'absurd & monstrous errors' that shroud Christianity, and to the 'disputed truths in theology' that echo Emerson's earlier censure of 'altercations among novices.' Additionally, Emerson's reference to confession introduces a condemnation of Christian sacraments that assumes

new significance when considered in relation to his 1832 resignation from the Unitarian Second Church in Boston. This resignation ostensibly occurred on the grounds of Emerson's disagreement with the Unitarian practice of the Eucharistic sacrament.

As in the letter he would write to Mary a few months later, in January 1827Emerson is clear about what he believes should replace the mediated relationship between man and God and its encumbering clothing of superstition and tradition. Again Emerson proposes a personal, entirely unmediated relationship to God, and in an echo of the language he will use in his letter to describe the 'truth bright & sublime' that resides in every mind, Emerson turns to metaphors of illumination to describe it. Emerson is clear that he imagines a relationship between every man and God in which truth – divine light – falls directly on the soul 'like the light of the sun.'

A central theme of progress in the passage, that which provides the logical framework for Emerson's statements regarding revealed religion and the additional mediating elements of organised Christianity. Although Emerson suggests a new, individualised conception of history, history as it is traditionally conceived is useful insofar as it reveals development in our understanding of morality. If ethics were, in fact, an 'immovable science,' Emerson suggests, we would not see in the passage of time the movement from 'the primeval altar of the Jews' to that upon which Christian society now worships; we would not see the progress from the 'ancient wisdom' of Classical philosophers to 'the great institution of Jesus Christ.' The key for Emerson, however, is the continuation of this progress. While the great institution of Christianity at one time 'embodied all that was known of the human

heart & and anticipated in its comprehensive revelations all that has since been known,' it has ceased in its progress toward truth. Now stagnant, it presents only an impediment to society's spiritual advance.

In a brief but important prefatory statement, Emerson qualifies the meaning of spiritual progress as used in the passage: 'Understand now, morals do not change but the *science* of morals does advance; men discover truth & relations of which they were before ignorant; therefore, there are discoveries in morals' (*JMN* 4:61; original emphasis). That is to say, it is not the divine presence – the 'light blazing before us' – that changes or develops over time; God is a constant unfaltering presence. Rather, Emerson suggests, our proximity to truth, our relation to it, may alter; it is for this reason that we now see 'we are standing on a higher stage.' These alterations in our standing come as a result of new spiritual and intellectual discoveries; according to Emerson, we are now 'instructed by a better philosophy, whose greater principles explain to us the design whilst they comprehend themselves the petty provisions of the less.'

Throughout the latter half of the 1820s, up to the composition and publication of *Nature*, Emerson develops the ideas found in this passage, namely the centrality of the mind to the revelation of truth, the notion of progress, and, crucially, the role that the natural world plays in this revelation. Central to each of these developments is Coleridge's philosophy that, like the 'species of moral truth' Emerson calls the first philosophy and records in *Nature*, seeks to mediate what Samantha Harvey refers to as the 'Romantic triad': '…a triangle in which the bottom two feet represent the natural world and the human world, and the top point represents the realm of the spiritual' (14). It is only natural that in developing a

conception of the Romantic triad, Emerson would turn to a philosophy like Coleridge's which offered several philosophically attractive and valuable elements: an emphasis on the power of the individual mind, and a philosophical framework to support it in the form of the distinction between mental faculties of reason and understanding; a dynamic method that emphasises progress; and an emphasis on an underlying mystery to the natural world.

It would take a number of years for Emerson to engage in a meaningful way intellectually with Coleridge's distinction between reason and understanding. As Henry Pochmann notes, it is not until 1831 that Emerson's use of the terms indicates his embrace of a Coleridgean relationship between them, and Greenham notes that it is not until 1834 that the distinction becomes a central element in Emerson's Romantic philosophy (Pochmann 165; Greenham 37). Coleridge's method would also increase in importance to Emerson in the two years prior to the publication of *Nature*, some years after Emerson first encountered Coleridge's method as it is put into practice in *Aids to Reflection* and as it is outlined explicitly in *The Friend*. This increase in significance in Coleridge's method coincides with Emerson's similarly newfound appreciation for Coleridge's emphasis on divine mystery in the natural world. What was immediately apparent to Emerson upon his first encounters with *Aids to Reflection*, however, was the significance of Coleridge's emphasis on the power of the individual human mind.

In the journal that Emerson used between 1829 and 1830, coinciding with his first encounters with *Aids to Reflection*, Emerson recorded the Latin phrase

Quantum sumus scimus for the first time.[9] Emerson almost certainly encountered the maxim in *Aids to Reflection* where it appears with the addition of a gloss: '*Quantum sumus scimus*. That which we find within ourselves, which is more than ourselves, and yet the ground of whatever is good and permanent therein, is the substance and life of all other knowledge' (*AR* 30n). Emerson goes on to cite the phrase on two other occasions in the following months, and would continue to sporadically refer to it throughout his life (Greenham 51). The Latin roughly translates to 'We are what we know,' a phrase that sanctions what in 1829 was Emerson's developing insistence on self-reliance, underscored by Coleridge's gloss. In his own extensive exploration of the significance of Coleridge's axiom to Emerson's Romantic philosophy, Patrick Keane succinctly expresses its centrality to Emerson's philosophical thought:

> Emerson found in the axiom and its gloss sanction for his concept of a self-reliance at once immanent *and* transcendent, biographical *and* grandly spiritual: a power, even divinity within, that is the ground, substance, and life of our permanent ethical nature and of all we can come to know. (70; original emphasis)

While Keane's comments refer to Emerson's Romantic philosophy in its fully developed state, Emerson would not arrive at a complete conception of the Romantic triad for a number of years following his first introduction to *Aids to Reflection*. Before Emerson could develop a full account and vision of the relationship between man, God, and nature, and therefore before Coleridge's

[9] As Greenham notes, Emerson actually records the phrase *Quantum scimus sumus*, transposing the final two words of the axiom (51).

philosophical thought became central to the expression of that relationship in *Nature*, Emerson would have to navigate his understanding of the triad's three categories: nature. In order to do so, both natural history and Coleridge's spiritual thought would be key.

Emerson and Natural History

Throughout the 1820s and the early 1830s, Emerson was not only coming to terms with revealed religion but also developing his conception of what could and would replace the Bible, filling the aforementioned moral gap that emerged when Emerson rejected the holy text as a source of revelation. The truncated account of this development is that in place of the Bible, God's book, Emerson embraced the divine power of another text, the book of nature. What this abridged account does not convey however, is that this substitution was not immediate, but rather required Emerson to engage with and eventually to supplement ideas derived from his study of nineteenth century natural history and natural theology. This engagement, which takes place throughout the 1820s and 1830s, enables Emerson to overcome a significant obstacle, one that David Robinson succinctly outlines in his essay, "Emerson's Natural Theology and the Paris Naturalists" (1980):

> While arguments from the design of nature would easily establish the existence of God, they could not so easily serve as the foundation for moral action. Nature clearly indicated a creator, but to desire an elaborate moral code from it, or even the moral principles necessary for the conduct of life, was much more problematic. (74)

Emerson's path toward establishing an account of the triad in which nature could, in fact, supply a moral code, is the subject of the following discussion. Central in this process are both Emerson's engagement with natural history and theology, and his later engagements with Coleridge's spiritual thought.

In the first chapter of *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism*, David Greenham explores in detail what he defines as Emerson's 'transition from Unitarian to Natural Historian in the 1820s and 1830s' (3). The following discussion provides its own necessarily abridged account of this period that is in fundamental agreement with Greenham's assessment. However, it is important to qualify Greenham's thesis by defining precisely what the terms 'Unitarian' and 'Natural Historian' signify in this context.

It would be easy to assume that the transition Greenham describes is one in which the term "Natural Historian" is used liberally to encompass not only strictly empirical nineteenth century approaches to the natural world, but also those that found evidence of God's existence in nature's design, those used by natural theologians. Emerson was exposed early in his adult intellectual development to natural theology, specifically the work of Joseph Butler and William Paley. Butler's *Analogy* (1736) and Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802) were standard reading in Harvard's undergraduate curriculum during Emerson's time there (Robinson 71; Clark 226–227). Butler's and Paley's natural observations centred on empirical observations of nature's design but, crucially, the scholars also worked to infer God's existence and character from these observations and to relate them to God as revealed in scripture (Robinson 71). This kind of natural theology is not entirely at odds with the beliefs of nineteenth century New England Unitarians, beliefs that

tended toward rationalism (Robinson 72–73). That is to say, New England Unitarians believed in the idea of Natural Religion but deemed it inadequate, requiring supplementation from Christian doctrine (Robinson 73).

What Greenham traces in the first chapter of his transatlantic exploration, however, is not Emerson's gravitation toward natural theology, but his gravitation toward the empirical consideration of the natural world without the confirmation and supplementation of scripture. That is to say, Greenham traces the changes that lead Emerson to his declaration in a journal entry from 1833: 'I will be a naturalist' (*JMN* 4:200). Greenham, like Robinson before him, identifies a period in which Emerson considers taking up scientific classification vocationally, if only for a short time (Greenham 32; Robinson 80). This period is brief and it is important to note that it is not one in which Emerson abandoned his desire to develop that 'species of moral truth' he called his first philosophy.

The journal entry in which we find Emerson's emphatic declaration, 'I will be a naturalist,' is part of a larger passage in which he records his impression of an encounter that Elizabeth Dant describes accurately as having achieved 'the mythic inevitability of Newton and the apple' (18). The encounter upon which Emerson reflects is that with visual representations of scientific classification in the cabinet of natural history at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. Emerson visited the museum and the Jardin des Plantes on the same day in 1833 on his European tour. During his travels, he also visited the Museum of Anatomy in Glasgow, which had been established and designed by the evolutionist John Hunter (Dant 21). The collection was arranged to imitate nature's ascending movement, as described by Elizabeth Dant in her essay entitled "Emerson and Natural History" (1989): 'the first

floor housed the remains of the lowest animal forms, with each ascending floor representing different strata and life forms, until the top floor, which housed man' (Ibid). It was the cabinet of natural history and the Jardin des Plantes that had the most profound effect on Emerson, however, and he records these effects in the journal entry noted above:

> Here we are impressed with the inexhaustible riches of nature. The universe is a more amazing puzzle than ever, as you glance along this bewildering series of animated forms, -- the hazy butterflies, the carved shells, the birds, beasts, fishes, insects, snakes, and the upheaving principle of life everywhere incipient, in the very rock aping organized forms. Not a form so grotesque, so savage, nor so beautiful but is an expression of some property inherent in man the observer, -- an occult relation between the very scorpions and man. I feel the centipede in me, -- cayman, carp, eagle, and fox. I am moved by strange sympathies I say continually "I will be a naturalist." (*JMN* 4:199–200)

What this journal entry records is the difference between exposure to scientific classification in books, and exposure to such classification visually and first-hand. Although this visual representation of scientific classification prompts the declaration of Emerson's intent to become a naturalist, his statement is founded upon Emerson's belief that there is potential for the revelation of something beyond what can be empirically observed in the classification of the natural world: 'some property inherent in man the observer.'

Upon his return to America, Emerson would cannibalise this journal entry for use in the first of four lectures he delivered to the Boston Society of Natural

History between November 1833 and May 1834. In the first three lectures, Emerson is enthusiastic about science and its potential to reveal the secret or 'occult' properties of natural world (Robinson 83–88). In these three instances, Emerson's enthusiasm coexists with his understanding of the natural world as revelatory of something within man himself, a property that, by this time, Emerson has begun to explicitly associate with the individual's moral properties. As he states in the first of his lectures, "The Uses of Natural History": 'The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass' (*EL* 1:24). Emerson will go on to use this phrase in *Nature*, incorporating it into his discussion of the symbolic power of language. However, as noted several times previously, a conception of nature as morally revelatory without the confirmation and supplementation of scripture presents difficulties. While Emerson repeats this phrase from "The Uses of Natural History" in his 1836 essay, before he can arrive at the conception of the triad that he expounds in *Nature*, Emerson must refine his understanding of the natural world and its reflective qualities. Namely, he must abandon the notion that empirical observation of the natural world is sufficient for the revelation of man's moral nature. In only a matter of months, the time between the delivery of his first natural history lecture in November 1833 and 7 May, 1834, the date on which Emerson delivers the fourth and final lecture of the natural history series, he does exactly that.

In his extensive exploration of Emerson's natural history lectures, David Robinson notes a significant tonal shift in the final lecture, "The Naturalist," coincident with a new portrayal of the potentials of empirical observation (Robinson 83–88). In "The Naturalist," Emerson concludes that science is in fact

insufficient to bridge the moral gap that emerges when one rejects revealed religion. Specifically, science is insufficient for Emerson because it is not appropriately dynamic, and Emerson's theory has developed into one that rests on dynamism, what he refers to in "The Naturalist" as a theory of *animated* nature:

> We are born in an age which to its immense inheritance of natural knowledge has added great discoveries of its own. We should not be citizens of our own time, not faithful to our trust, if we neglected to avail ourselves of their light. The eternal beauty which led the early Greeks to call the globe…Beauty pleads ever with us, shines from the stars, glows in the flower, moves in the animal, crystallizes in the stone. No truth can be more self evident than that the highest state of man, physical, intellectual, and moral, can only coexist with a perfect Theory of Animated Nature. (*EL* 1:24)

As in the passage from his 1827 journal discussed extensively above, Emerson again appeals to history to show man's progress. In this instance, the progress to which Emerson refers is intellectual rather than spiritual, and he refers specifically to knowledge of the natural world. Although man has admittedly added to historical discoveries in the realm of natural knowledge, Emerson insists that we must continue to strive for a theory of nature that fully and truly reflects its dynamism. Empirical observation alone cannot achieve that theory, however, and he states elsewhere in the lecture that 'We are not only to have the aids of Science but we are to recur to Nature to guard us from the evils of Science' (*EL* 1:76).

Exploring Emerson's journal entries in the period leading up to his delivery of "The Naturalist" in May of 1834, Robinson notes Emerson's increasingly frequent remarks regarding the limitations of scientific classification (85). One of the journal

entries to which Robinson turns in demonstration of such increasingly frequent and emphatic observations was written on 5 May, and Robinson refers to the following passage in particular:

> The true classification will not present itself to us in a catalogue of a hundred classes, but as an idea of which the flying wasp & the grazing ox are developments. Natural History is to be studied not with any pretention that its theory is attained, that its classification is permanent, but merely is full of tendency. (*JMN* 4:290) (quoted Robinson 85)

Robinson notes the significance of the word 'tendency' in the passage and its suggestion of dynamism, concluding that, for Emerson, 'No system of classification…can pretend to final truth because of this fluidity of nature' (85). I do not dispute Robinson's interpretation, and am in fact in agreement with his reading of the passage. Rather, I wish to supplement Robinson's association of this journal entry with Emerson's newfound scepticism of empiricism by noting that, directly preceding this passage Emerson identifies a significant *source* of his newfound understanding of a dynamic theory of nature:

> Mr Coleridge has written well on this matter of Theory in his Friend. A lecture may be given upon insects or plants, that, when it is closed irresistibly suggests the question, "Well what of that?" An enumeration of facts without method. A true method has no more need of firstly, secondly, &c. than a perfect sentence has of punctuation. It tells its own story, makes its own feet, creates its own form. It is its own apology. The best argument of the lawyer is a skilful telling of the story. The true classification will not present itself to…. (*JMN* 4:290)

The significance of Coleridge's method, both as it is outlined in *The Friend* and as it is demonstrated in *Aids to Reflection*, will be discussed at length in the forthcoming discussion of Emerson's use of this method in *Nature*. However, at this juncture it is important to note at least in passing that Emerson's abandonment of science as a credible path toward the discovery and expression of nature's dynamism is directly tied to his exposure to Coleridge's method.

Coleridge's method insists not only on dynamism, but also on progress and on process (Harvey 70). As early as 1827, Emerson illustrated his own insistence on both qualities in his 1827 letter to Mary Moody Emerson when he insisted that 'To *ask* questions, is what this life is for – to answer them the next' (*L* 1:208). What Coleridge's method offers Emerson is a sanction for this questioning as well as the support of a developed conceptual framework, both of which Emerson values more highly as he begins to develop his Romantic philosophy in earnest.

As he is preparing to leave Europe and return to New England that Emerson records for the first time his intention to write 'a book about nature,' marking a transition in the seriousness with which he develops his first philosophy and a development in the intellectual rigour with which he engages with Coleridge's ideas (*JMN* 4:237). The concurrence of these events is not coincidental, and Emerson deliberately turns to Coleridge's works for guidance as he more seriously develops his own ideas.

In the period between 1833 and 1836, between his return to America and the publication of *Nature*, Emerson also discovers a newfound appreciation for two further aspects of Coleridge's thought, both of which have been noted previously: the idea of divine mystery, and the distinction between the reason and the

understanding. The latter, like method, will be discussed in greater detail in the following section dedicated to Emerson's use of *Aids to Reflection* in *Nature*. As such, I will not speak at length regarding its increased significance to Emerson upon his return to America and his attendant development of the first philosophy, except to echo David Greenham's observation:

> In 1834, after Coleridge, the understanding is restricted [for Emerson] to the ordinary objects and concerns of time and space – mere phenomena. Reason as an abstract noun, which he detaches from its verbal form, belongs to the understanding's "reasonings," is "eternal". (Greenham 38)

As I begin to conclude this initial discussion of Emerson's reception of Coleridge's ideas, I will, however, speak in greater detail about Coleridge, Emerson, and the notion of divine mystery.

Emerson would have encountered Coleridge's conception of divine mystery both in *The Friend* and in *Aids to Reflection*. In the former, Coleridge writes that '*The solution of Phaenomena can never be derived from Phaenomena*' and in the latter declares that '*There is nothing the absolute ground of which is not a mystery*' (*F* 1:500; *AR* 139; original emphasis). If the cabinet of natural history at the Jardin des Plantes was significant for its visual representation of the mystery beneath the natural world – 'occult relations' and 'strange sympathies' between varied natural objects – then Coleridge's spiritual thought presented Emerson with a philosophical sanction for that mystery which Emerson had only recently decided – with Coleridge's help again – could not be comprehended through empirical observation alone. 'What Emerson will take from [these statements],' writes Greenham, 'is that the Enlightened naturalist or metaphysician can only work with phenomena,

usefully generalizing, hypothesizing, and taxonomizing them; this is not enough' (32). Emerson's declaration in "The Naturalist" that 'We are possessed with a conviction that Nature means something, that the flower, the animals, the sea, the rock have some relation to us which is not understood which if known could make them more significant,' does the work of Coleridge's aforementioned statements in *Aids to Reflection* and *The Friend* (*EL* 1:78). As Greenham notes, 'Emerson is not merely noting the limits of nineteenth century science, rather he, like Coleridge, is protecting a mystery that draws onward, and withdraws from, the inquiring spirit' (33).

In defining Emerson's reception of Coleridge's spiritual philosophy, specifically the theological speculations found in *Aids to Reflection*, it is possible to distinguish between two distinct periods. In the first period, which spans Emerson's first encounter with *Aids to Reflection* in 1829 up to the later months of 1833, Emerson recognises the significance of Coleridge's ideas; however, he has yet to engage thoroughly and rigorously with Coleridge's philosophy. In the second period, that from the later months of 1833 to the publication of *Nature* in August 1836, Emerson engages most rigorously with Coleridge's philosophical works and with *Aids to Reflection* specifically. Informing the newfound intensity of Emerson's engagements is his decision in 1833 to take up literary pursuits, specifically, his decision to write 'a book about Nature' in which he would for the first and only time, present his first philosophy as a unified philosophical treatise. In taking up philosophical pursuits seriously and, for the first time, as a self-described writer, Emerson turns to who he considered to be the most significant contemporaneous

spiritual philosopher – Coleridge – and to the text most representative of Coleridge's philosophical genius – *Aids to Reflection*.

Recognising the significance of Coleridge's thought to his task, however, is also anxiety-inducing in its incursions on Emerson's self-reliance. In asserting his unique philosophical system, he must also distinguish himself from the ideas to which he is indebted. The following comparative study explores this transition.

Emerson's Coleridgean Assimilations: Philosophical Distinctions and Method

The previous section outlined the significance to Emerson of Coleridge's ideas regarding the power of the subjective enquiry – that encapsulated in the Latin axiom *Quantum sumus scimus,* found in *Aids to Reflection* – as well as the importance of Coleridge's emphasis on an underlying divine mystery to the world reiterated in both *The Friend* and *Aids to Reflection*. One can understand *Nature* as Emerson's attempt to outline a first philosophy that preserves mystery – that is to say divinity – in the world, but also one that suggests we might have access to this mystery; that we might be able to behold God 'face to face' (*CW* 1:7). In outlining his argument for this spiritual prospect in *Nature*, Emerson turns to *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge's philosophical expression of this very same idea.

In *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge outlines the potential inherent within each individual to 'form the mind anew after the DIVINE IMAGE' (*AR* 25). At the foundation of Coleridge's spiritual philosophy is the distinction between two universal

categories, the natural and the spiritual, thus maintaining he crucial notion that 'There is nothing the absolute ground of which is not a mystery' (*AR* 139).

James Marsh's "Preliminary Essay" to *Aids to Reflection*, included in his 1829 American edition of Coleridge's text, pointed explicitly to the significance of this distinction to the spiritual thought in Coleridge's text. In his essay, Marsh also identified a second significant distinction: that between the faculties of the reason and the understanding. Perhaps because of Marsh's insistence on their significance, Emerson integrated both of these central distinctions in this expression of his first philosophy comprising *Nature*.[10] For Emerson, as for Coleridge in *Aids to Reflection*, there is an underlying divine mystery in the world, but it is also one to which we have access if we would only harness the full potential of our divine mind and, in doing so, pass from a state of unconscious thought to consciousness. Significantly, for both writers, this passage to consciousness and its attendant access to the divine mystery underlying the world, is a matter of Atonement (at-one-ment). Emerson describes this in *Nature* as beholding God face to face; for Coleridge in *Aids to Reflection*, it is a progress toward godlikeness.

In sketching his philosophical system in *Nature*, Emerson is also indebted to Coleridge's method as outlined in *The Friend* and demonstrated by *Aids to Reflection*. In *Nature*, Emerson illustrates the possibility of at-one-ment and delineates the general manner by which one might achieve it. In *Nature*, Emerson provides a 'manual for the rules of architecture' rather than 'a plan of the palace' (*AR* xi). Integral to Coleridge's method, which is to be outlined in detail in

[10] Both David Greenham and Patrick Keane argue that too much has been made of the significance of Marsh's essay in regard to its guidance of Emerson's thought (Greenham 43; Keane 65n).

forthcoming pages, is intellectual ascent, which begins with the 'facts of hourly experience' and moves upward to sublime heights (*F* 1:446). The spiritual enquiry outlined in *Aids to Reflection* follows this pattern, as does Emerson's spiritual first philosophy in *Nature*; in both instances, the writers incorporate numbered sequences to structure their expression of this spiritual ascent.

In assimilating Coleridge's method, Emerson also adopts its central notion of progress. In doing so, Emerson utilises the very ideas to which he is indebted to depart to new intellectual circumferences, moving past or detaching from ideas while necessarily containing them within his new circle of thought. The key to Emerson's detachment is the strict distinction between the natural and the spiritual found in *Aids to Reflection*. More specifically, Emerson departs from Coleridge regarding the manner by which man achieves the sublime heights from which one beholds God face to face.

For Coleridge, the mind's achievement of the divine image follows a process in which nature is left out entirely, and he maintains nature's antithetical distinction from spirit throughout *Aids to Reflection*. It is important to note that Coleridge's definition of polarity, central to his philosophical thinking, states that all opposition in the universe tends toward reunion. As such, one must assume that in Coleridge's understanding, at some point the natural and the spiritual are unified. However, the fact that no reunion of these categories is alluded to in *Aids to Reflection* renders it somewhat anomalous in Coleridge's oeuvre, a fact that James Boulger relates to Coleridge's increasingly dogmatic Christian thinking in the later years of his life (*Coleridge as a Religious Thinker* 206). Conceivably, Coleridge is able to maintain this antithesis because he has the support of revealed religion, and James

Marsh identifies as part of Coleridge's aim in *Aids to Reflection* to be 'prov[ing] the doctrines of the Christian Faith to be rational, and exhbit[ing] philosophical grounds for the *possibility* of a truly spiritual religion' (*AR* 501).

As traced in the previous discussion, however, Emerson's first philosophy did not have the support of revealed religion, and he was required to supplement the revelations of the Bible with those of a new text, one that offered unmediated and immediate access to divine presence. In replacing the book of God with the book of nature, Emerson revised Coleridge's account of spiritual atonement to one in which man's moral relationship to the natural world was a central feature.

For Coleridge, atonement is a process of reflecting inward using the reasoning faculty to contemplate the divinity that resides within. As such, Coleridge confines the process entirely to the self in *Aids to Reflection*. Like Coleridge, Emerson posits atonement in *Nature* as a process of reflection, but the direction to which one turns the eye of reason is not inward. Rather, in the final two chapters of his essay, Emerson presents an argument for nature's necessity in the process of its own transcendence. It is only in turning the eye of reason outward that we can achieve the sublime heights of atonement because, for Emerson, 'The laws of moral nature mirror those of matter like face to face in a glass' (*CW* 1:21). The following discussion explores Emerson's use of and detachment from *Aids to Reflection*, focusing on the elements outlined above and prefacing a discussion of the original creation that this engagement facilitates and empowers.

Both *Aids to Reflection* and *Nature* hope to preserve divine mystery, the idea that something universal and unifying lies beneath all phenomenon. However,

both texts also present accounts of the potential to know and to access the divine fabric of the universe. In maintaining mystery, a central parallel between the texts and one of Emerson's pivotal assimilations from Coleridge is a distinction between that which is natural and that which is spiritual, or between what Emerson calls nature and soul. This is the common starting point for both Coleridge in *Aids to Reflection* and Emerson in *Nature* (Greenham 71).

As noted above, the distinction between the natural and the spiritual is one of two to which James Marsh drew readers' attention as a 'key' to understanding Coleridge's spiritual system in *Aids to Reflection* (*AR* 497). In that essay, Marsh describes the distinction as that 'between *nature* and *free-will*,' a characterisation that speaks to Coleridge's idea of origination as found in *Aids to Reflection* (*AR* 497). Coleridge defines Spirit in the text as 'that which has its principle in itself, so far as to *originate* its own actions' (*AR* 80). Nature, by way of contrast, 'forever [has] its necessity in some other thing, antecedent or concurrent' (*AR* 78n). As such nature participates in what Coleridge calls the **'**Mechanism of Cause and Effect,' which he defines in a footnote to the text as follows:

> Whatever is comprised in the Chain and Mechanism of Cause and Effect, of course *necessitated*, and having its necessity in some other thing, antecedent or concurrent—this is said to be *Natural*; and the Aggregate and System of all such things is Nature. It is, therefore, a contradiction in terms to include in this the Free-will, of which the verbal definition is—that which *originates* an act or state of Being. In this sense, therefore, which is the sense of St. Paul, and indeed of the New Testament throughout, Spiritual and Supernatural are synonymous. (*AR* 80; 78n)

The notion of origination rests, then, on the notion of free will, and it is the possession of this quality that constitutes at least in part Coleridge's argument for man's inclusion in the category of spirit rather than nature. Man's spiritual will does not work on man from a divine source without, but works *with* the divine Spirit:

> It is sufficient, in short, to prove, that some distinct and consistent meaning may be attached to the assertion of the learned and philosophic Apostle, that "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit" – *i.e.* with *the Will*, as the Supernatural in Man and the Principle of our Personality – of that, I mean, by which we are responsible Agents; *Persons*, and not merely living *Things*. (*AR* 77–78)

Distinguishing us as beings, rather than things, the human will is 'the true and only strict synonime of the word, I, or the intelligent self' (*AR* 139–140). It endows us with the 'power of *originating* an act or state,' in antithesis to nature, which is 'always becoming' or 'about to be born (*AR* 268n; *AR* 251).[12]

Emerson uses language similar to that found in *Aids to Reflection* to distinguish between the natural and the spiritual in *Nature*. In the penultimate "Spirit" chapter of his essay, Emerson defines nature as that which is 'faithful to the cause whence it had its origin' and as a 'perpetual effect' (*CW* 1:37). However, it is the definition from the "Introduction" to Emerson's essay that betrays the extent of his indebtedness to Coleridge's thought:

[12] Coleridge's attributes his idea of the originating self to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslere* (1794), writing in the *Biographia Literaria* that 'by commencing with an act, instead of a thing or substance, Fichte assuredly gave the first mortal blow to Spinozism' (quoted Greenham p. 71). For more information on the Fichtean origins of Coleridge's self-originating act, see Greenham pp. 71–78.

> Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the not me, that is both nature and art, all other men, and my own body, must be ranked under this name, nature. (*CW* 1:8)[13]

Emerson's definition presents an antithetical relationship between Nature and Soul like that between Nature and Spirit in *Aids to Reflection*, and one in which man is firmly located in the spiritual realm. However, there is a significant caveat insofar as Emerson distinguishes between one's soul and one's corporeal being. This distinction between the body and the soul is connected to the notion of the possession of free will – a body is only a vessel for the acts originated by the will, which exists entirely separately from the corporeal form. In addition, there is a second quality to which man's spiritual nature is tied, and one that is again entirely separate from physical being, a faculty 'by which a knowledge of spiritual truth, or of any truths not abstracted from nature, is rendered possible': the faculty of reason (*AR* 252).

Coleridge aligns reason directly with the spiritual and, more specifically, with Christian theology in *Aids to Reflection*, defining it as 'an influence from the *Glory of the almighty*' and as man's 'nourish[ment] by the one DIVINE WORD' (*AR* 219; original emphasis). For Coleridge, reason is a faculty of the mind that allows for our perception of truth and is distinct from the understanding. Reason is that which

[13] Patrick Keane has also noted the Cartesian distinction between *res cogitans and res extens* at work in Emerson's definition, as well as the Fichtean distinction between *Ich* and *Nicht-Ich* mentioned earlier in relation to *Biographia*. Such a distinction can also be found in the work of Schelling and Novalis (171). There is no indication, however, that Emerson read the works of these writers before or during the period in which he composed *Nature*.

apprehends spiritual truths and has 'the Power of the universal and necessary Convictions, the source and substance of Truths above Sense, and having evidence in themselves' (*AR* 216). The understanding, by way of contrast, is the faculty of the mind confined to truths abstracted from nature and in relation to the 'objects of our senses' (Ibid).

For Emerson, as for Coleridge, reason is distinguished from the understanding on the basis of what it is applied to and what it is capable of revealing. Crucially, understanding is the faculty that corresponds to '[o]ur dealing with sensible objects' (CW1:24). As Emerson defines it in the "Discipline" chapter of his essay,

> Every property of matter is a school for the understanding, -- its solidity or resistance, its inertia, its extension, its figure, its divisibility. The understanding adds, divides, combines, measures, and finds everlasting nutriment and room for its activity in this worthy scene. (*CW* 1:23)

Reason, on the other hand, is a divine faculty that Emerson defines early in the "Language" chapter of his essay, without any reference to the related but distinct faculty of the understanding:

> Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason: it is not mine or thine or his, but we are its; we are its property and men. (*CW* 1:18)

Greenham notes of Emerson's language in these instances that he appears to have little time for Coleridge's 'abstract terminology' in *Aids to Reflection*, preferring instead to use language that offer a 'more immediate rendering' of the capabilities of each of the faculties (43). For instance, whereas Coleridge's definition of reason refers abstractly to 'the Power of the universal and necessary Convictions' and to 'the source and substance of Truths above Sense,' in Greenham's words, 'Emerson goes directly to things his reader would understand: "Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom", which comprises his universal soul' (Ibid).

Emerson is also prone in *Nature* to use metaphorical language, a habit that Greenham associates with Emerson's exposure to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*.[14] Greenham associates one turn of phrase in particular to *Sartor Resartus* and Thomas Carlyle: the 'eye of pure reason' (46). As Keane notes, however, ocular metaphors in relation to the powers of the mind are also a feature in the writing of the other two major Romantic writers to whom Emerson turned throughout his life and on whom this study focuses: Wordsworth and Coleridge (356). In "Tintern Abbey," for example, Wordsworth describes moments of visionary power as moments in which 'we see into the life of things,' and the image recurs throughout Wordsworth's Intimations Ode, as well as *Aids to Reflection* where Coleridge refers to reason as a '*seeing* light' and an '*enlightening* eye,' among other references (Keane 356; *AR* 15). However, such imagery, suggests Keane, 'may be said to culminate in *Nature'* (Ibid).

[14] For a detailed exploration of the rhetorical links between *Sartor Resartus* and *Nature*, c.f. Greenham, pp. 45–46.

It is in the perhaps the most infamous passage of Emerson's essay that we find his first correlation between sight and the reasoning faculty that, albeit oblique, is one of the most significant in the texts:

> Standing on the bare ground, -- my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. (*CW* 1:10)

The passage gives readers a sense of the process by which Emerson understands reason to allow for the comprehension of divine mystery in the world, one presented as an ascension to sublime heights. We begin the passage firmly rooted in nature, standing on the bare ground of the earth, and therefore we begin firmly within the realm of the understanding, which exists to add, divide, combine, and measure the properties of matter. As one looks toward sublime heights with head uplifted into infinite space, the reasoning faculty is engaged and the eye of reason opens. However, there is not only one transition in this passage, but two. The first is a passage from the natural world and our comprehension of it through the application of the understanding, to 'the I and the "eye" [that] are the me as consciousness' (Greenham 86). The second and most meaningful transition in regard to atonement is represented in the passage by the transparency of the eye (of reason) Emerson describes, and it details the individual's passage from consciousness to transcendence (Ibid). In becoming 'part or particle of God,' having the 'currents of the Universal Being circulate through' one's self, all things rooted in the bare ground of nature disappear, including the body itself – we become only a transparent eye. In this moment, the NOT ME of nature fully recedes, leaving only

the divine ME that is capable of unity with God. Thus, in its 'highest moments' reason becomes a 'form of pure seeing' (Chai *Romantic Foundations* 333).

In addition to associating reason with sight in *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge's account of the reasoning faculty also incorporates central notions of ascension and progress. The process that Coleridge describes in *Aids* follows an ascending pattern of 'moral architecture' from prudence to morality to religion (*AR* 6). Echoing his description of the text's sublime task as the formation of the mind after the divine 'image,' Coleridge defines these three elements in terms of divine likeness. Prudence aids the mind in preparing the 'shrine and framework' for God's image (*AR* 27); morality is 'the body, of which faith in Christ is the soul' (*AR* 31); and spirituality or religion comprises

> ...all truths, acts and duties that have an especial reference to the Timeless, the Permanent, the Eternal…. It comprehends the whole ascent from uprightness (morality, virtue, inward rectitude) to *godlikeness*, with all the acts, exercises, and disciplines of mind, will, and affection…. (*AR* 42)

Additionally, with each step upward from prudence to morality and, finally, to spirituality, another faculty of the mind or soul is engaged. The prudential engages the senses and the understanding, morality engages the conscience, and spirit engages the faculty of reason, facilitating a passage from consciousness to unconsciousness. The ascending nature of Coleridge's spiritual enquiry is also reflected in the structure of his text, which scales these three categories in a series of sequentially ordered and numbered aphorisms.

An ascending structure is also found in *Nature*, which opens, like the transparent eye-ball passage, on bare ground in the "Nature" chapter, and outlines

the larger task of the essay. Subsequently, the essays proceeds through a number of discussions regarding man's relationship to the sensible world ("Commodity," "Beauty," "Language," and "Discipline"). Each of these chapters builds upon the last, in what Robert Lee Francis terms 'definitional escalation,' allowing Emerson to move from 'minutiae which are principally the concern of the scientific naturalist' toward the spiritual heights of the essay's closing three chapters –"Idealism," "Spirit" and "Prospects" – which reveal the nature of transcendence (45).

Like Coleridge's progressive movement through the prudential, moral, and religious in *Aids to Reflection*, Emerson's text proceeds in an ascending structure, and each chapter presents ideas of increasing or ascending complexity. In "Commodity," Emerson states his intention to outline the tangible and obvious uses of the natural world – 'those advantages which our senses owe to nature' (*CW* 1:15). In the succeeding chapter, "Beauty," Emerson ascends through a tripartite discussion of 'the nobler wants of man' served by nature (*CW* 1:19). In short, these three aspects of beauty are delight, virtue, and intellect, arranged in order of their increasing complexity. Delight is elicited by 'the simple perception of natural forms,' while virtuous actions are beautiful in their combined stimulation of sensuous response and the will: 'A virtuous man, is in using with [nature's] works, and makes the central figure of the visible sphere' (*CW* 1:20, 27). Lastly, beauty in relation to the intellect is described as the mind's conscious (willed) attempt to search for 'the absolute order of things' (*N* 28). Following "Beauty," in the chapter entitled "Language," Emerson explores nature's symbolic meaning, or its value as 'the vehicle of thought' (*CW* 1:32). Again the chapter presents a threefold ascending discussion, moving from lower to higher aspects of natural symbolism. "Discipline"

is a twofold discussion of the natural world as, firstly, a 'discipline of the understanding' and, secondly, a conformation to the 'premonitions of Reason' (*CW* 1:47, 51).

However, the final three chapters of *Nature* are unique and a large portion of my concluding thoughts are dedicated to this section of Emerson's essay. In precis, these chapters outline the spirit portion of Emerson's essay. "Idealism" outlines in five numbered sections the mind's transcendence of the spiritual world and the 'reverential withdrawing of nature before its God' (*CW* 1:62). "Spirit" returns briefly to the natural world, and "Prospects" looks into the future toward man's prospective union with God, accomplishing this somewhat paradoxically by looking to the past and imagining an account of man's fall from grace.

The structure of Emerson's essay and its use of numbered sequences throughout the first six chapters has been linked to Emerson's emulation of scientific method, correspondent with an emphasis in these chapters on the value of nature's adaptation to man's physical wants, love of beauty, and moral sense – to use Francis Bowen's description once again.[15] Equally plausible is that this is not an imitation of empirical method (or at least not *only* an imitation of empirical method), but rather an imitation of Coleridge's philosophical method and voice. Emerson abandons these sequences only in those chapters that coincide with his detachment from Coleridge's ideas regarding man's spiritual journey to God. In place of such sequences, "Spirit" and "Prospects" embrace a new, less structured

[15] Julie Ellison presents an account of the numerical sequences in *Nature* as an imitation of the scientific method in *Emerson's Romantic Style* (87). More comprehensive is Eric Wilson's discussion of Emerson's essay throughout *Emerson's Sublime Science* (1999), in which he also considers what I have referred to as Emerson's leading thought in *Nature* to be the 'hypothesis' of the text (42).

style that is to be discussed in detail in the portion of this chapter dedicated to the creative issuances resultant from Emerson's antagonistic reading of *Aids to Reflection*.

In both *Aids to Reflection* and *Nature*, structure and the ascending nature of the spiritual enquiries themselves are dictated by Coleridge's principles of method. Coleridge's "Essays on the Principles of Method" are found in *The Friend* and their significance to Emerson is illustrated by the copious marginal annotations that can be found in his personal copy of the text (Harvey 67). Coleridge's method is also demonstrated in the nature of his philosophical enquiries in both *The Friend* and *Aids to Reflection*, and the manner in which these enquiries are presented in these texts.

In discussing Coleridge's method it is important to distinguish, as Trevor Levere does, between a method and a system. While a method guides spiritual and intellectual enquiry, a system organises it, and the more complete that organisation or classification, the less it encourages progress and further enquiry (221). 'Coleridge, seeking a system, had a method,' writes Levere, and this method actively avoided ossification; Coleridge's method was

> like that of science itself; [it] was living, generative, and far from abstract. His method, transcending the abstraction of his philosophy, was a major constituent of his intellectual vitality and of his continuing and major importance in our own imaginative life of the mind. (Ibid)

Emerson, who writes in 1850 that '[t]he more coherent and elaborate a system, the less I like it,' was certainly not only drawn to but also influenced by Coleridge's method (*CW* 4:76). A staunch believer in active engagement rather than

passive perception, a coherent system was too proscriptive for Emerson, as his nebulous philosophy and his writing about that philosophy attest. A style that 'suggests rather than tells,' is more congenial to the American writer (Packer 7). The two defining features of Coleridge's method are its progressive nature and its commencement with a leading thought (Hipolito "Coleridge's Lectures" 259).

In its goal of aiding each individual in the 'formation for itself of sound…principles in regard to the investigation, perception, and retention of truth,' *The Friend* embraces a Method that is intellectually progressive method. Coleridge's method commences with 'most familiar' truths – the 'facts of hourly experience' – until a leading thought has been established, after which it 'gradually [wins] its way to positions the most comprehensive and sublime' (*F* 1:446). Coleridge's '*leading Thought*' or 'initiative' provides direction and guidance for further intellectual enquiry. As Tim Milnes notes, however, the leading thought, is not a 'truth of formal logic' or an 'empirical fact,' but rather it 'must be an Idea embedded in "life," capable of growing and seeding further thought' (*The Truth about Romanticism* 169). The validity of this Idea is determined by the efficacy of the thoughts and conclusions that follow (Jackson 39).

The necessarily progressive nature of Coleridge's method is a quality he describes and defines in relation to the Greek word *Μεθοδος,* 'a *way* or *path of Transit*' (*F* 1:457; original emphasis). This word is apt not simply for its description of the guiding rather than didactic nature of the method Coleridge proposes, but also because it evokes the image of thought as a journey. Without continuous transition and progress on this intellectual journey, 'there can be no Method,' only

‘a mere dead arrangement, containing in itself no principle of progression’ (*F* 1:457).

Coleridge’s emphasis on subjective enquiry and intellectual progress is also reflected in formal elements of *The Friend*, namely the fact that the text is interspersed with interstitial essays, portions of the text that he called ‘Landing Places’ (*F* 1:148–149). These landing places are collections of essays ‘in some degree miscellaneous,’ and are meant for the reader’s ‘amusement, retrospect, and preparation’ (xiii). These spaces provide at once a view of those subjects and ideas the individual has passed in his or her intellectual ascent, as well as a vision of ideas yet to come in their intellectual enquiry. As Samantha Harvey describes it, ‘The landing place was a place to pause, reflect, and gaze around, simultaneously engaging different perspectives of high and low, near and far, subsequently exercising various powers of vision’ (55).

Although there are no specified landing places in *Aids to Reflection* as there are in *The Friend*, there are a number of reflective “Comments” in Coleridge’s later philosophical work that function similarly. Interspersed variously between aphorisms, these comments to explore more thoroughly ideas presented in various preceding aphorisms, and often anticipate ideas introduced in subsequent sections. The aphorisms themselves also often require the reader to have fully considered and understood ideas previously presented, compelling the reader to reflect back on previous concepts in order to fully comprehend Coleridge’s meaning and the direction of the enquiry. As such, they function much like landing places, compelling the reader to reflect on the previous steps in their intellectual journey. At times, Coleridge is explicit in asking the reader to reflect, particularly in regard to

significant aspects of the text, as is the case with the distinction between reason and understanding. In his discussion of this distinction, Coleridge asks that the reader '[t]urn back for a moment to the Aphorism, and having re-perused the first paragraph of this Comment thereon, regard the two following narratives as the illustration' (*AR* 220).

Having sketched out Emerson's three greatest assimilations from Coleridge in *Nature* – the distinction between nature and spirit on the basis of will, the distinction between the Reason and the Understanding, and Coleridge's method – the following section focuses on Emerson's detachment from Coleridge's thought coincident with the American writer's formal and stylistic distancing from *Aids to Reflection*. In exploring this detachment, I will investigate the process by which atonement occurs in both *Aids to Reflection* and *Nature*. In both instances, ascension is a movement closer to a divinity that is already within. Emerson, for example, presents this as 'continual self-recovery' (CW 1:39) and Coleridge as the acquiring of 'SELF-KNOWLEDGE' through 'the art of reflection' (*AR* 10). In Coleridge's latter reference to the notion of reflection, however, we find our greatest distinction between his system and Emerson's. Both propose an act of reflection through the opening of the eye of reason, but the direction in which Coleridge and Emerson imagine this gaze to be turned is reversed. For Coleridge, self-knowledge is acquired through acts of reflection directed inward; in Emerson's understanding, self-recovery comes when one turns the gaze outward to the natural world.

Coleridge, Emerson, and Reflection

Aids to Reflection *and* parakupsas

Coleridge's conception of spiritual atonement in *Aids to Reflection* centres on the notion that we possess divinely-endowed qualities – reason and will – and that when used to their full potential, these qualities allow for the possibility of achieving godlikeness, whereby one becomes a reflection of God's image. The title of Coleridge's work contains several layers of meaning, however, and the process by which the divine image is achieved is also a *process* of reflection.

In the previous discussion of Emerson's reception of and receptivity to Coleridge's ideas, the significance of the Latin axiom *Quantum sumus scimus* was discussed in some detail, but I would like to return again to the passage in which the axiom is found. In describing the significance of this Latin phrase, Coleridge qualifies his understanding of the idea that 'we are what we know,' by specifying the location of this knowledge:

> *Quantum sumus scimus*. That which we find within ourselves, which is more than ourselves, and yet the ground of whatever is good and permanent therein, is the substance and life of all other knowledge. (*AR* 30n)

This inwardly residing knowledge to which Coleridge refers is an inner divinity that, as we have seen above, corresponds both to the Reason and the Will, our spiritual endowments and the qualities that distinguish us as beings from mere things. Achieving godlikeness, then, is a matter of accessing that which exists already within ourselves, that enlightening eye or seeing light within, and of reflecting that

quality outward. In Douglas Hedley's words, 'The soul's end is to see the light by which it is enlightened…' (225).

The manner in which Coleridge understands the individual to access this inner light introduces still one further layer of meaning to the title of his spiritual work. The process of seeing this inner light requires that one turn their eye of reason inward in a process of self-reflection or 'parakupsas':

> The Greek word, parakupsas, signifies the incurvation or bending of the body in the act of *looking down into*; as for instance, in the endeavour to see the reflected image of the star in the water at the bottom of a well. A more happy or forcible word could not have been chosen to express the nature and ultimate object of reflection, and to enforce the necessity of it, in order to discover the living fountain and spring-head of the evidence of the Christian faith in the believer himself, and at the same time to point out the seat and region where alone it is to be found. (*AR* 30n; original emphasis)

The path toward godlikeness, toward forming the mind after the divine image, is a matter of looking inward at the light within. To turn again and a final time to Hedley's words, 'the object of the soul's longing is *itself* at a deeper level' (160; original emphasis). As such, Coleridge's spiritual system in *Aids to Reflection* maintains in no uncertain terms the antithetical distinction between the natural and the spiritual and, as such, between nature and man, in its understanding of the individual's ascent toward 'inter-communion with the Divine Spirit' (*AR* 217). The only eternal qualities in Coleridge's system are those that we find within ourselves; all else, including the world in which we live, is impermanent.

'As face to face in glass': Emerson, Nature, *and reflection*

Throughout the first five chapters of *Nature*, Emerson enumerates a mounting list of nature's assets in the realms of commodity, beauty, language, and in discipline, but in the chapter entitled "Idealism," Emerson finally establishes in detail his philosophical argument for the antithesis between Nature and Soul that he defined in the essay's "Introduction." In "Idealism," Emerson mounts an argument for nature's impermanence; he demonstrates that nature is not 'the Final Cause of the Universe' but an 'Appearance we call the World' (*CW* 1:29). Some, he says, cling to the notion that the former is true out of fear, because 'Any distrust of the permanence of laws, would paralyze the faculties of man' (*CW* 1:29–30). Relating this more explicitly to the distinction between the reasoning faculties and those of the understanding, Emerson uses the phrase 'reflective powers' as a euphemism for Reason, a decision almost certainly inspired by Coleridge's language of reflection in *Aids to Reflection*: '…so long as the active powers predominate over the reflective, we resist with indignation any hint that nature is more short-lived or mutable than spirit' (*CW* 1:30). Making explicit the association between what he refers to as reflective powers and man's power of reason, in "Idealism" Emerson provides readers with perhaps his most explicit description of the reason's revelatory abilities:

> When the eye of Reason opens, to outline and surface are at once added, grace and expression. These proceed from imagination and affection, and abate somewhat of the angular distinctness of objects. If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, outlines and surfaces become

> transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. The best, the happiest moments of life, are these delicious awakenings of the highest powers, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before its God. (*CW* 1.30)

In terms similar to Coleridge's, Emerson again emphasises the visionary qualities of the reasoning faculty and identifies it as a divine endowment. Furthermore, his reference to nature's withdrawal before 'its God' demonstrates in more poetic terms a central element in Coleridge's spiritual system: our access to and use of the eye of reason reveals our own divine, permanent nature. At the same time, the application of reason reveals the impermanence of the natural world as it withdraws before us.

Having established his philosophical foundations not only for the chapter "Idealism," but for the philosophical concept of idealism on which the chapter is based – the permanent, spiritual nature of man's reasoning faculty and the impermanence of the natural world – Emerson's chapter proceeds through five areas of culture that 'affect our convictions of the reality of the external world' (*CW* 1:35). Using numbered sequences like those that characterise preceding chapters, Emerson identifies these five areas – motion, poetry, philosophical science, intellectual science, and religion – as those that 'imbue us with idealism' and he outlines the manner by which they achieve their increasing or ascending effectiveness (Ibid).

Although Francis Bowen is not explicit in his aforementioned review of *Nature* regarding exactly where he identifies the earth having cracked beneath his feet while reading it, I imagine that Bowen's description refers to "Idealism."

Admittedly, it is in this chapter that Emerson appears to singlehandedly undo the work of the previous chapters, declaring nature nothing more than an impermanent element, one that is rendered transparent if we would only apply the full powers of our divine minds. Conceptually, however, "Idealism" is in keeping with the antithesis that Emerson established in the opening pages of his essay between the natural and the spiritual, the realm of the understanding and that of reason. Structurally, too, the chapter maintains the numerical sequences, arranged in ascending order, that characterise "Beauty," "Language," and "Discipline." "Idealism" is ostensibly the apex of the ascending spiritual enquiry Emerson traces in *Nature*, and almost certainly was meant as the conclusion to the "Nature" essay, originally intended to accompany a separate essay on the subject of "Spirit" (Packer 27). The greatest shift in *Nature* is not found in "Idealism" but in the chapters that follow, "Spirit" and "Prospects." This shift is both an ideological detachment from Coleridge and from *Aids to Reflection* as well as an expression of the original, self-reliant ideological creation that this detachment empowers.

Emerson's ideological detachment in "Spirit" and "Prospects" is presaged by Emerson's comments in the closing paragraphs of "Idealism" that, despite his understanding of its impermanence, he has 'no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it' (*CW* 1:35). 'Children, it is true,' he writes some sentences later, 'believe in the external world' (*CW* 1:36). It is in Emerson's description of idealism in the final sentences of the chapter, however, that give the greatest hint as to the thematic shift about to occur in the forthcoming two chapters:

> Idealism sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully

> accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity, for the contemplation of the soul. Therefore the soul holds itself off from a too trivial and microscopic study of the universal tablet. It respects the end too much, to immerse itself in the means. It sees something more important in Christianity, than the scandals of ecclesiastical history or the niceties of criticism; and, ever incurious concerning persons or miracles, and not at all disturbed by chasms of historical evidence, it accepts from God the phenomenon, as it finds it, as the pure and awful form of religion in the world. It is not hot and passionate at the appearance of what it calls its own good or bad fortune, at the union or opposition of other persons. No man is its enemy. It accepts whatsoever befals [sic], as part of its lesson. It is a watcher more than a doer, and it is a doer, only that it may better watch. (*CW* 1:36)

These concluding thoughts to "Idealism" begin seemingly positively regarding idealism as a philosophical theory. Idealism sees the world in God, and it sees unity in the world – both are positive attributes. From here, Emerson appears to list only innocuous consequences of the otherwise rewarding nature of the comprehensive unity of which idealism makes us aware. With access to a conception of universal unity, one tends to avoid 'microscopic unity of the universal tablet,' and an ostensibly positive 'respect for the ends' results in an inattention to the means. By the time one arrives at Emerson's thoughts on Christianity and the relationship between revealed religion and an unchallenged acceptance of the ideal theory, however, the tone is markedly more negative. Emerson's references to the

'scandals of ecclesiastical history,' 'chasms of historical evidence,' and 'the niceties of criticism' echo earlier criticism of revealed religion in the 1827 journal entry noted some pages ago, in which he describes the need to abandon a religion bound by the 'altercations of novices' and the 'absurd & monstrous errors' of scriptural interpretation (*JMN* 3:61–62).

Emerson's final statements in this passage are the most damning. In these concluding sentences, Emerson suggests that idealism as it stands – as a mode of thought that cares only for ends rather than means – runs counter to the progressive, active method that he believes must necessarily govern all legitimate enquiries, the method he assimilated from Coleridge. Idealism is a watcher, not a doer; it is passive and static rather than progressive and active. Emerson's implied critique at the end of "Idealism" is made more explicit in the opening statements of the following chapter that directly follow:

> It is essential to a true theory of nature and of man, that it should contain somewhat progressive. Uses that are exhausted or that may be, and facts that end in the statement, cannot be all that is true of this brave lodging wherein man is harbored, and wherein all his faculties find appropriate and endless exercise. (*CW* 1:37)

So begins Emerson's argument for the insufficiency of idealism contained in "Spirit," and as such, so begins his revision of a central tenet of Coleridge's spiritual system in *Aids to Reflection*: the distinction between the natural and the spiritual.

In an attempt to fix the problem of idealism's stasis and subsequent stagnancy, Emerson redefines its parameters entirely, declaring that the views sketched throughout the first six chapters of the essay 'do not include the whole

circumference of man.' Using language that, although indebted to empiricism, veils a reference to Coleridge's concept of the leading thought, Emerson twice declares idealism a 'hypothesis,' an 'introductory' thought that 'account[s] for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry,' and which 'apprize[s] us of the eternal distinction between the soul and the world' (*CW* 1:37, 38). In Barbara Packer's words, however, "Spirit" renders idealism nothing more than a 'temporary landing-place in a larger dialectic'; in widening the parameters of idealism to include the whole circumference of man, Emerson also widens the circumference of Coleridge's thought, surpassing the intellectual boundaries presented in *Aids to Reflection* while also necessarily incorporating them into his own thought (Packer 57).

The key to Emerson's redefinition of idealism is found early in "Spirit" and presented in terms of hypothetical questions. Idealism as it is presently understood, says Emerson, answers the question 'What is matter?' – 'matter is a phenomenon, not a substance' (*CW* 1:37). Its stagnancy is explained, however, by its inattention to two further and, in Emerson's understanding, equally significant questions: 'Whence is [matter]? and Whereto?' (Ibid). That is to say, Emerson believes idealism should provide an answer regarding the origins of matter as well as its ultimate ends. Although earlier in the essay Emerson had stated that idealism 'sees God in the world,' in "Spirit," he clarifies that this is only a small portion of what is required of idealism as a spiritual and philosophical theory. 'Yet, if it [idealism] only deny [sic] the existence of matter,' he writes, 'it does not satisfy the demands of the spirit. *It leaves God out of me*' (*CW* 1:37; emphasis afdded). Emerson hopes

that, in exploring the two aforementioned questions, he will correct the major failing of idealism: its inability to unite us with God's divine presence.

The second question Emerson poses, that regarding nature's ultimate ends, has been answered already in his earlier accounts of reason – nature's ultimate end is prospective transparency before a fully and permanently opened eye of reason. In "Prospects," Emerson will offer a vision of that future for the first time and will present a far more comprehensive picture of the pivotal role that nature plays in the very process by which it is ultimately transcended. It is in "Spirit," however that Emerson proposes an answer to the first question, 'Whence is matter?':

> The world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious. But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subjected to the human will. Its serene order is inviolable by us. It is therefore, to us, the present expositor of the divine mind. It is a fixed point whereby we may measure our departure. (*CW* 1:38–39).

Although nature is for Emerson, as for Coleridge, bound by the mechanism of cause and effect and thus defined in opposition to spirit which is its origin, Emerson's reference to the will in this instance points to a significant departure from Coleridge's thought. Emerson asserts not only nature's inviolability by man but also, by extension, man's spiritual weakness – his inability to assert over the natural world his spiritual endowment of free will. Emerson provides an explanation for this impotence in a statement that follows: 'We are as much strangers in nature, as we are aliens from God' (*CW* 1:39).

Alienation from God is a function of man's fallenness, and one that Coleridge acknowledges, too, in *Aids to Reflection*:

> …I profess a deep conviction that man was and is a *fallen* creature, not by accidents of bodily constitution, or any other cause, which *human* wisdom in a course of ages might be supposed capable of removing; but as diseased in his *Will*, in that Will which is the true and only strict synonime of the word, I, or the intelligent Self. (*AR* 139; original emphasis)

A crucial distinction, however, between Emerson's account of fallenness in *Nature* and that which is found in *Aids to Reflection* is the fact that man is not only fallen, but has continued to fall throughout history. History, writes Emerson, is nothing more than 'the epoch of one degradation,' increasing our distance from both nature and God (*CW* 1:42). Emerson's answer to this increasing estrangement is, quite simply, a renewed appreciation for the natural world that is 'beautiful mother' and 'gentle nest' (*CW* 1:36). His reconceptualization of idealism centres on an acknowledgement that it is only from the platform of nature's bare ground that one can ascend to the sublime heights in which we become part or particle of God.

Emerson defines the problem of our alienation from nature, that which in turn leads us to estrangement from the divine image, as a problem of the soul, but one both caused and cured by modifications to our vision:

> The problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty, is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or blank, that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opake. The reason why

> the world lacks unity, and lies broken in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself. (*CW* 1:43)

To correct our spiritual vision is to correct the way that we look at the objects around us. In Emerson's understanding, to see matter simply as 'a phenomenon, not a substance' is to see the world around us only by 'the wintry light of the understanding' (*CW* 1:44). To look at nature and see 'that every phenomenon has its roots in the faculties and the affections of the mind' – to understand that the laws of moral nature answer to those as face to face in a glass, as Emerson proposed in "Language" – however, is to 'look at the world with new eyes' (*CW* 1:44).

In "Spirit" and "Prospects," Emerson maintains the distinction between the spiritual and the natural. We are not only fallen beings but ones whose continued degradation has led to our alienation both from God and from nature. The process of ascension toward sublime, divine heights always results in the transcendence of the natural world, which is phenomenal, and as such Emerson maintains the distinction between the natural and the spiritual that also defines Coleridge's account of atonement. The distinction between Emerson's and Coleridge's systems, however, is that Emerson refuses to submit to what he perceives as the limiting and stagnating notion that matter is *only* a phenomenon. In Emerson's understanding, that nature has its origins in spirit renders it the 'present expositor of the divine mind,' and thus the necessary foundation for the individual's ascent to divine heights.

In "Spirit" and "Prospects," Emerson abandons the numbered sequences that characterise the essay's previous chapters. Julie Ellison has previously read this

structural shift in Emerson's essay in a similar manner to that explored in the following pages, that is to say, in relation to ideas of self-reliance and Emerson's assertion of independence from incursive texts. However, Ellison and I differ in our interpretation of the nature of this shift and its significance in regard to the assertion of self-reliance. Ellison interprets Emerson's use of the numbered sequences throughout the first six chapters of *Nature* as

> …an awkward version of the later essays' sudden metamorphoses from a tone of realistic humility to one of aggressive self-reliance. *Nature* should therefore be read and taught not as Emerson's quintessential utterance but rather as an unrepresentative work in which he imitates "scientific" method. If it is so read, his essays can be seen developmentally as texts in which the constraints of a more naïve phase have relaxed and Emerson's paradigmatic structure has come into its own. In them, he collapses step-by-step demonstrations into large, rapid transitions from one level to another. (87)

I agree with Ellison that the numerical sequences are representative of an awkward or rather undeveloped form of tonal metamorphoses found in later works, transformations that correspond to assertions of self-reliance via symbolic detachment. However, I understand the numerical sequences not as an early form of 'large, rapid transitions from one level to another' that constitute the conscious struggle of the author's will, what Ellison refers to elsewhere in *Emerson's Romantic Style* as the 'contest between reader and writer, Jacob and angel' (79). In this instance, these numerical sequences do correspond to a conscious struggle between reader and writer, but it is not the transitions within the sequences themselves that are of note, rather the transition away from the use of these

sequences at all. In this shift we find not only the expression of a general struggle between reader and writer, influence and expression, but the expression of a struggle between Emerson as a reader of Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* specifically, and as a writer of a new, original spiritual philosophy distinct from but also greatly indebted to that found in Coleridge's text.

In abandoning the sequentially ordered patterns of his first six chapters in "Spirit" and "Prospects," Emerson embraces a distinct and more fluid structure that corresponds with a more Emersonian style, particularly in "Prospects." In the final chapter of his essay, rather than outline the philosophical tenets of his system as he had done previously, Emerson instead offers an imaginative vision of prospective atonement. In doing so, Emerson returns to the moment where man's degradation began: the Fall.

Elsewhere in his essay, Emerson suggested that one achieves transcendence fitfully, in brief but happy moments when the eye of reason opens. In "Prospects," Emerson presents a vision or fable of one's *permanent* transcendence achieved upon the resumption of our power and the kingdom of man over nature:

> Man is the dwarf of himself. Once he was permeated and dissolved by spirit. He filled nature with overflowing currents. Out from him sprang the sun and moon; from man, the sun; from woman, the moon. The laws of his mind, the periods of his actions externized themselves into day and night, into the year and the season. But, having made for himself this huge shell, his waters retired; he no longer fills the veins and veinlets; he is shrunk to a drop. He sees, that the structure still fits him, but fits him colossally. Say, rather, once it fitted him, now it corresponds to him from far and on high. (*CW* 1:42)

In offering a fable of the fall and, by extension, a vision of future prospects, Emerson distinguishes his essay from *Aids to Reflection* which, in its complete embrace of the principles of method, necessarily lacks 'beatific consummation' (Hipolito "Coleridge's Essays" 259). We might think of Emerson's fable as a kind of consummation by mirror image (reflection), an account of the future through a vision of the past; or, as Emerson phrases it, a vision that is 'both history and prophecy' (*CW* 1:42).

In his account of this vision, Emerson also distinguishes himself stylistically from the essay's preceding chapters, embracing an interplay of voices throughout "Prospects," namely that of the essayist and of the newly introduced Orphic Poet. It is this stylistic decision by which Barbara Packer understands Emerson to 'first really [become] "Emerson"' (63). That Emerson includes the voice of an Orphic Poet specifically underscores the creative implications of this final chapter. Throughout "Prospects," it is clear that Emerson is deeply concerned with what it means to be a poet and, more specifically, a poet of original vision and talent. In introducing his Orphic Poet to the reader, for example, Emerson establishes a definition of a writer's visionary goals: 'A wise writer will feel that the ends of study and composition are best answered by announcing *undiscovered* regions of thought, and so communicating, through hope, *new activity* to the torpid spirit' (*CW* 1: 41; emphasis added).

Most significant, however, is the fact that the fable presented by the Orphic Poet as an account of history and prophecy can be read as a metaphor for the creative process itself. 'Every spirit builds itself a house,' the Orphic Poet states toward the conclusion of his second and final interlude,

> …and beyond its house, a world, and beyond its world, a heaven. Know then, that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. What we are, that only can we see. All that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have and can do. Adam called his house, heaven and earth; Caesar called his house, Rome; you perhaps call yours, a cobler's [sic] trade; a hundred acres of ploughed land; or a scholar's garret. Yet line for line and point for point, your dominion is as great as theirs, though without fine names. Build, therefore, your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions. (*CW* 1:44–45)

What else is a writer's task, especially as Emerson will go on to define it in works like "Quotation and Originality," but to build one's self one's own world. The poet's mission, in Emerson's understanding is transcendent, a process by which one takes thought and expression – that which, like phenomenon, exists for our personal growth – into one's self, and expresses in verse or prose, as one would in action (in 'conforming your life'), the pure idea in your mind.

The Poet's reference to Adam, too, has creative implications. Only three years later, Emerson will forge an explicit connection in his journals between the figure of Adam and the creative – that is to say generative –naming that is the task of the poet. 'Adam in the garden,' writes Emerson, 'I am new to name all the beasts in the field and all the gods in the sky. I am to invite men drenched in Time to recover themselves and come out of time, and taste their native, immortal air' (*JMN* 5:288). Emerson delights in "Prospects" as he does in his journals in his apparent originality of position and the creative implication of that originality. He does not like the

Orphic Poet look prospectively at a time when he will name the beasts in the field and the gods in the sky; having detached from Coleridge's thought, he is already in a world of his own making. As such, the naming of the beasts and of the gods is both his task and his accomplishment in *Nature* generally and in "Spirit" and "Prospects" specifically. Emerson's first philosophy is a corrective to the deficient moral and spiritual insights not only of Coleridge but of all thinkers, and in expressing that philosophy Emerson has reached a new circle of thought. Specifically, Emerson has achieved this through antagonistic engagement with *Aids to Reflection*. In "Spirit" and "Prospects," Emerson ascends past the circumference to which Coleridge and his restrictive ideas specifically are confined and in doing so reaches new uncharted territory – an original vision of the world untouched like the Garden of Eden.

"Prospects": Emerson's Orphic Poet, Creative Metaphor, and Temporal Reimagining

In addition to providing a myth or 'dream' of man's original relation to the universe through the Orphic Poet's visionary prose, the second voice in the chapter, what I will call the voice of the essayist, defines the nature of that vision and our access to it. In doing so, in the opening paragraphs of the chapter the essayist turns to both natural and cultural examples:

> In a cabinet of natural history, we become sensible of a certain occult recognition and sympathy in regard to the most bizarre forms of beast, fish, and insect. The American who has been confined, in his own country, to the

> sight of buildings designed after foreign models, is surprised on entering York Minster or St. Peter's at Rome, by the feeling that these structures are imitations also, - faint copies of an invisible archetype. (*CW* 1:40)

Ellison notes the conflation of nature and culture as a theme throughout *Nature*, with Emerson repeatedly using cultural allusions to describe the natural world, subsequently breaking down the distinction between the two (88). As a result, Emerson reinforces an additional and more fundamental distinction – that between the natural and the spiritual – reiterating his expanded definition of Nature from the "Introduction" to his essay: '*Nature*, in the common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf. *Art* is applied to the mixture of his will with the same things, as in a house, a canal, a statue, a picture' (*CW* 1:8; original emphasis).

In this emphasis on the subjective versus the objective – the primacy of the relationship between the divine mind and God over all aspects of the NOT ME, 'nature and art, all other men and my own body' – Emerson embraces a subjectivism that Stephen Spender links to ideas of nation (Ibid). In his seminal and early work on the complex relationship between English and American writers, *Love-Hate Relations* (1974), Spender notes in American writers a division 'between history – [their] roots within England and European tradition – and geography – the immensity of America and sense of [their] own being expanding to embrace that immensity' (12). Such a division, I argue, in part dictates Emerson's engagement with *Aids to Reflection* and, more fundamentally, his conception of creative reading.

Elsewhere in *Love-Hate Relations*, Spender links this division or antithesis to the accounts of the natural world found in a variety of American literary works:

> This division was between objective Europe and subjective America. Objective Europe was the historical, reaching back to the past within which the individual could escape from his personality into the tradition crystallized in libraries, museums and architecture, greater than the life of any single living generation. Subjective America was geographical, the identification of the single separate American with other Americans and the whole continent and beyond the continent, the whole earth and nature, and the universe. This sense of individual consciousness reaching to surrounding objects and lives was more intensely felt by Americans than by Europeans, because of the lack of an American past. The unexplored continent spoke in the present tense. Europe spoke in the past tense. (12)

Although in "Prospects" and in *Nature* generally, Emerson proposes that the individual reaches not only *to* surrounding objects but, in essence, *past* them, to something that lies beyond or beneath, it is possible to see the applicability of Spender's definition. The landscape to which Emerson refers when he points the individual toward the natural world in *Nature* is not inherently or explicitly American. However, the very fact that Emerson locates the foundation for one's spiritual ascent – that is, the foundation for the total assumption of divine consciousness – in the natural world is an act of national significance. Furthermore, it is an act enabled by the fact that nineteenth century Americans possessed, in the possibilities of the untouched Western landscape, a subjective Eden in which the prospects of objective truth could be located.[17]

[17] While "'untouched,' the American West was, of course, inhabited by indigenous peoples.

In proposing this future as a return to the past, that is to say, in presenting an account that is both history and prophecy, Emerson and his Orphic Poet embrace an account of time that Robert Weisbuch calls futurism and which he identifies as one of four archetypal accounts of history embraced by nineteenth century writers to respond to 'the British taunt of no history' (153–154). Futurism is a paradoxical striving for 'a future earlier than the present' in which American literary future – the expression of the divine truth that rests prospectively in the American landscape – is originary (170). This productive or originary account of prospective poetry is epitomised in the Poet's references to Adam noted earlier.

However, while in "Prospects" the Orphic Poet presents readers with a vision of permanent transcendence, throughout *Nature* the assumption of consciousness is defined in transitory, fleeting terms. In brief moments in which the eye of reason opens, the individual has access if only momentarily to the unity of spirit. As such, the Orphic Poet's prophetic account of the Fall also incorporates a second kind of time identified by Robert Weisbuch in *Atlantic Double-Cross*: vertical time. In "Prospects," the past collapses 'into an expanded present inhabited by an expansive self. What history can provide, this moment can provide as well, to the seer of large vision and perfect empathy' (171). Again, Spender's account of the national implications of the expanding and potentially expansive American self are pertinent, but in this instance, the temporal collapse that Weisbuch describes has more immediate national implications.

In light of Weisbuch's notion of vertical time, Emerson's aforementioned reference to the great architectural structures of Europe, assumes new significance and begs more detailed analysis. Although in the passage Emerson aligns the

natural and the cultural in opposition to the spiritual truth that lies beneath both, his treatment of the two examples is markedly different. The cabinet of natural history on which he remarks in the first instance is described as providing the observer with a sense of the 'occult recognition and sympathy' between all natural objects. By way of contrast, his second architectural example not only underscores Emerson's distinction between nature and spirit, objective and subjective, it is also a defence against accusations of American cultural imitation, what one might interpret alternatively as a lack of American past or, in Robert Weisbuch's words, a cultural thinness. The imitative aspects of American structures designed after foreign models is excused by the fact that even the originals – York Minster and St Peter's – are imitations themselves of a far more fundamental, spiritual archetype.[18]

A consequence of Emerson's universalization of culture – that is to say, his location of all cultural symbols in a common, universal origin – is, again, an effective collapsing of linear history. If all objects including cultural objects proceed from the same universal origin, York Minster and St Peter's, symbols of European culture and thus of European history, are rendered as significant (or as insignificant) as any American example. When compared to the eternity of the universal divine, time or history becomes something near to irrelevant. Later in the chapter, in declaring 'the element of spirit' to be 'eternity,' the Orphic Poet will declare this more explicitly: 'To [spirit], therefore, the longest series of events, the oldest chronologies are

[18] Significantly, too, one of these examples is English, specifically.

young and recent' (*CW* 1:42). In this emphasis on the individual and on the moment, Emerson nullifies all but the ME.

In *Nature*, Emerson engages antagonistically with one text predominately, Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*. This text is the most representative of the British writer's anxiety-inducing creative and intellectual influence. Emerson assimilates key aspects of Coleridge's thought and methodology into his own philosophical thought in *Nature* while also departing from Coleridge in several key ways. Where Coleridge maintains the rigidly defined distinction between spirit and nature in his account of atonement, locating the possibility of divine transcendence entirely in the divine self, comprised of the will and the reason, Emerson conceptualises a more interdependent relationship between all three categories of the Romantic triad. Reimagining the account of reflection that Coleridge presents in *Aids to Reflection* as an outward gaze to nature, rather than one solely inward to the self, Emerson establishes a first philosophy at once distinct from and indebted to Coleridge's own. In his assertion of this self-reliance, Emerson demonstrates the simultaneous significance of both the national or extrapersonal, and the creative or personal influence that Coleridge wields, presenting a vision of transcendence in the final chapter of his essay that weaves together metaphors of personal creative and national independence.

In the following chapter, that which centres on Emerson's engagement in the "Woodnotes" poems with Wordsworth's *The Excursion*, the same pattern emerges. Again, Emerson engages with Wordsworth's poem for its representative

quality. In this instance, however, it is Wordsworth's genius as a philosophic poet to which Emerson is attracted and that he identifies as being incursive.

Emerson's "Woodnotes" Poems and Wordsworth's *The Excursion*

2

In a lecture entitled "Doctrine of the Soul," delivered in 1838, Emerson defines Wordsworth's value as a philosophic poet as his incorporation of and expression of 'the music of humanity' in his poetry (*EL* 3:8). Emerson elaborates his use of the phrase, itself taken from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," describing the music as the 'Idea or principle' behind life – that which is '…the human soul in these last ages striving for a just publication of itself through priest and legislator and poet which is the subject of history and the author of revolutions' (*EL* 3:9). Given his high praise for the poet on the grounds of his philosophical expression in the period during which he was composing his "Woodnotes" poems, it is no wonder that a number of scholars have noted various Wordsworthian parallels and echoes in Emerson's two works.

Perhaps the most recent scholar to explore these connections is Patrick Keane. In the "Woodnotes" poems, Keane reads three central Wordsworthian inheritances that are both formal and thematic. Firstly, Keane identifies that the "Woodnotes" poems fall into a structural pattern associated with the Petrarchan sonnet and with Wordsworth, namely 'the immediate presentation of a scene followed by an explicit interpretation of that presentation' (243). Keane also notes a parallel to the *Lyrical Ballads* in the first "Woodnotes" poem's 'jaunty tetrameters

and the imperative to “leave…pedant lore apart,”’ and a connection to the ‘Wordsworthian apotheosis of the Child’ found in the Intimations Ode (244).

Keane’s discussion of the “Woodnotes” poems in *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason* augments earlier scholarship like that of Frank Thompson. In his 1928 essay, “Emerson’s Theory and Practice of Poetry,” Thompson explored at length the links between Emerson’s two “Woodnotes” poems and Wordsworth’s Intimations Ode, focusing predominantly on Wordsworth’s creative and formal influence. Relatively more recently,

Joseph Warren Beach and Carl Strauch focused on the ideological parallels between Emerson’s account of the Romantic triad in the “Woodnotes” poems and Wordsworth’s in *The Excursion* in *The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry* (1936) and in “Emerson and the Doctrine of Sympathy” (1967) respectively. Beach’s assessment of the “Woodnotes” poems, to which he refers as a single entity, “Woodnotes,” most concisely conveys the general Wordsworthian echoes in the ascending conception of the Romantic triad found in Emerson’s two texts:

> Nearly every aspect of Emerson’s feeling for nature is here represented [in “Woodnotes”]; and here is shown particularly well the connection there is in Emerson’s mind between nature-lore, the esthetic beauties of the woodland, the wholesomeness of rustic life, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the philosophical concept of universal nature and the religious concept of “the eternal Pan.” In his way of assuming this connection between two complex sets of ideas Emerson is following in the tradition of Wordsworth and the great romantic poets. (348)

R.A. Yoder's analysis of the "Woodnotes" poems in *Emerson and the Orphic Poet in America* is unique among the aforementioned scholarship insofar as it focuses on the apparent influence of Wordsworth's ideas regarding imaginative development. Specifically, Yoder notes the overt echo of Wordsworth's *Prelude* in the image of the shore found in "Woodnotes II" (When thou shalt climb the mountain cliff, / Or see the wide shore from thy skiff, / To see the horizon shall express / But emptiness on emptiness (ll.252–255)). Of this image in the second "Woodnotes" poem, Yoder writes that '…similar to the classic Wordsworthian episodes, it shows the uninitiated poet looking on a precipice or at the shore from his skiff' (122). Emerson's account is distinguished from Wordsworth's, however, insofar as nature in Emerson's poem 'holds no drama, nor even a moral nudge,' but only emptiness (Ibid).

In each of these instances, connections identified in the Woodnotes poems to Wordsworth's works are either highly specific, observing Wordsworthian echoes in particular phrases or scenes, or they are general and broad, noting the poems' overall Wordsworthian tone or even more broadly, its Romantic genealogy. In several instances, particularly in the case of Frank Thompson's analysis and that of R.A. Yoder, critical exploration also focuses predominately on the second of Emerson's "Woodnotes" poems.

The comparative analysis undertaken in the following chapter demonstrates that reading the "Woodnotes" poems as expressions of Emerson's antagonistic engagement with *The Excursion* specifically, rather than (or in addition to) reading them as poems that engage more obliquely and generally with Wordsworth's poetry, offers a new perspective on the poems. Firstly, contemplating the poems as

engagements with *The Excursion* brings "Woodnotes I" out of the shadows, demonstrating significant Wordsworthian parallels in a poem often disregarded in this context. Additionally, this comparative model demonstrates the concomitant significance to Emerson of Wordsworth's philosophic talents *and* his treatment of imaginative development, combining analysis like that of Yoder with the more traditionally thematic focus of scholars like Strauch and Beach.

Emerson, we have seen, is very much interested in what it means to write, to create original expression, and Wordsworth's attention to notions of imaginative development was greatly attractive to the American poet. Unlike his aforementioned public comments regarding Wordsworth's philosophic talents, however, Emerson does not appear to explicitly acknowledge his attraction to Wordsworth's poetry on these grounds either privately or publicly. That being said, when Emerson includes in an 1837 journal entry a 'small selection' of poems from Wordsworth's volumes that he believes 'contain all their poetry,' Emerson not only lists twelve poems comprising some of Wordsworth's greatest writing regarding the music of humanity, but also includes poems like the Intimations Ode that express Wordsworth's understanding of imaginative development (*JMN* 5:335). The poems Emerson catalogues in 1837 as the most representative of Wordsworth's talents are "Fidelity," "Tintern Abbey," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," "Ode to Duty," "September, 1819," "The Force of Prayer," "Ode to Lycoris," "Lines on the Death of Fox," "Dion," "Character of the Happy Warrior," "Laodamia," and the Intimations Ode.[19] The sustained significance to Emerson of these poems is demonstrated by

[19] Frank Thompson has also noted that the verse forms of the poems included in Emerson's list – 'blank verse, the rimed couplet, the Pindaric measure, the quatrain, and the versification of *Laodamia*, which is composed of

his inclusion of ten of the twelve in his edited anthology of poetry, *Parnassus* (1871), nearly four decades after his original journal entry; Emerson omits only "The Old Cumberland Beggar" and "Lycoris" (Thompson "Emerson's Theory and Practice of Poetry" 1174).

Emerson's inclusion of "The Old Cumberland Beggar" in his original list is of note in its illustration of Emerson's attraction to a third quality in the British writer's poetry, at least in the period during which Emerson was at work composing the "Woodnotes" poems. "The Old Cumberland Beggar" exemplifies the element of social critique at work in much of Wordsworth's poetry, particularly that of the 1790s. In engaging with social criticism, Wordsworth centres "The Old Cumberland Beggar" and poems like it ("Michael," "We Are Seven," "The Female Vagrant," etc.) on impoverished subjects and on the subject of poverty, a topic that is in turn 'linked inextricably with the politics of reform, the war with France, and the steady industrial transformation of English social and cultural practices' (Harrison 16). In its various intersecting and peripheral narratives from that of the impoverished Margaret to the world-weary Solitary, *The Excursion* incorporates critiques of all of these aforementioned elements.

As we will see in the next section which briefly discusses Emerson's engagement with Wordsworth's poetry – his reception of it and receptivity to it – Emerson was not always a proponent of the British writer or his poems. Throughout the 1820s, Emerson was overtly critical of Wordsworth's work, and it was only in the early 1830s that the tone of his journal entries and letters changed in reference

a quatrain and a couplet' – include every type of poetry that Emerson practiced as well ("Emerson's Theory and Practice of Poetry" 1175).

to the British writer's poetic and philosophical genius. Throughout this early period, however, Emerson remained supportive of the fact that Wordsworth incorporated 'things near' into his poetry, those elements that are 'not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote'; Wordsworth embraces the 'common,' the 'familiar,' and the 'low' (*CW* 1:67). Unlike critics such as Francis Jeffrey and William Hazlitt, with whose contemporary criticism of *The Excursion* Emerson was familiar, Emerson held Wordsworth's poem in high esteem for its 'choice of persons' rather than critiquing it on this basis (*JMN* 1:271). Furthermore, critics like Linden Peach have noted that several of Emerson's works appear to be inspired by Wordsworth's ideas regarding 'humble and rustic life,' specifically Wordsworth's emphasis on the relationship to nature enjoyed by those whose lifestyle ties them to the land (Peach *British Influence on the Birth of American Literature* 55). Peach notes "The Poet" as an example of one of these works, and marks the "Woodnotes" poems as Emerson's only attempt to make the common man the subject of his poetry as Wordsworth does (Ibid).

In precis, *The Excursion* is of particular significance for Emerson because it coalesces three important elements: Wordsworth's ability to convey the music of humanity (and the nature of this music), his attention to notions of imaginative development, and his incorporation of the common and the low. We might more easily refer to this coalescence as Wordsworth's genius as a philosophic poet more generally, that which enabled him to incorporate each of these important elements into his works. Emerson found in *The Excursion* an epitome of this genius and it rendered the poem one of Wordsworth's most attractive works. Even in the period during which Emerson was most critical of the poet and his poems, the American

writer referenced *The Excursion* positively in his journals, even defending it against criticism.

In an Emersonian system of creative reading, however, the presence of congenial and influential elements in a work is as much admirable and attractive as it is anxiety-inducing. That *The Excursion* presented Emerson with an expression of three elements most representative of Wordsworth's genius also rendered the poem a potent symbol of Wordsworth's creative and ideological influence. As such, in engaging with *The Excursion* in the "Woodnotes" poems, Emerson did so antagonistically, performing acts of detachment in his poems from Wordsworth's ideas and, as such, from the spectre of Wordsworth's influence.

Emerson performs his detachment from two elements of Wordsworth's thought. The first is related to Wordsworth's conception of the Romantic triad, or the nature of the music of humanity he conveys in *The Excursion*, and the second to the peripheral account of imaginative development contained in the Poet's narrative. Emerson's detachment in both instances centres on the nature of and development of the relationship between a poet figure and an itinerant peasant in the "Woodnotes" poems which echoes that between the Poet and the Wanderer in *The Excursion*. Additionally, in detaching from Wordsworth's conception of the Romantic triad specifically, Emerson does so through engagement with the constitutive dramatic or dialogic element found in *The Excursion*, that explored by scholars like Sally Bushell, Alison Hickey, and John Risinger, to all of whom which the following discussion of Wordsworth's poem is indebted.

Before embarking on a discussion of Emerson's assimilations of and detachments from elements of Wordsworth's thought, as in the previous chapter, I

will first contextualise Emerson's engagement with Wordsworth and *The Excursion* with a discussion of the American writer's reception of and receptivity to Wordsworth's works. In doing so, I would like to look briefly at Emerson's history of engagement with the poet prior to the composition and publication of the "Woodnotes" poems. While the value of engaging with Wordsworth's works and Wordsworth's value more generally eventually became to Emerson the British poet's expression of philosophical poetry, this value was not acknowledged or perceived in Emerson's youth (Thompson "Emerson's Theory and Practice of Poetry" 1170). Throughout the 1820s and in the early years of the 1830s, Emerson's journal entries record a distaste for and, at times, an outright opposition to Wordsworth's poetry, as we will see in the following pages. Emerson's newfound appreciation for Wordsworth's poetry in the early 1830s coincides with Emerson's newfound intellectual rigour in engaging with Coleridge's philosophical distinctions, and is determined by the same motivating factors: Emerson's abandonment of revealed religion for the book of nature and his decision to embark upon a literary career.

As the previous chapter traced in great detail Emerson's introduction to the ideas noted above, the account of Emerson's reception of and receptivity to Wordsworth's ideas that follows focuses on tracing Emerson's changing opinion of Wordsworth's poetry through exploration of his journal entries. In doing so, it also demonstrates that both before and after Emerson's change of heart regarding Wordsworth's talents as a philosophic poet, Emerson speaks positively of *The Excursion*. Wordsworth's later poem appears to be one of the few in Wordsworth's oeuvre immune to Emerson's early distaste for the British writer's work.

Wordsworth in Emerson's Journals

Emerson's journals reveal that his engagement with Wordsworth's poetry ostensibly commences in 1819, during Emerson's time at Harvard College. It comes as little surprise that Harvard should have been the place where Emerson first encountered the Lake Poet; during this period, the university was known as a Wordsworthian stronghold (Pace, "Wordsworth and America," 236). Wordsworth's influence on Harvard College scholarship can be traced at least in part to the Unitarian figure Andrews Norton, who was appointed the university's Dexter Professor of Sacred Literature in 1819. Norton admired the spiritual message of Wordsworth's poems and made an effort to acquire as many editions of his works as possible for the school's library (Pace, "Wordsworth and America," 236). Norton would eventually become a vocal opponent of Emerson's transcendentalism, attacking his "Divinity School Address" (1838) on religious grounds in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and later denouncing Transcendentalism more generally in *A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity* (1839) (Habich, "Emerson's Reluctant Foe," 210). Due to his part in fostering a pro-Wordsworthian atmosphere at Harvard in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Norton ironically helped to shape the same transcendental ideology that he would vocally condemn in the 1830s.

The volume to which Emerson refers in the 1819 journal entry I will decsribe in greater detail shortly is almost certainly the American edition of *Lyrical Ballads* published and printed in two volumes in 1802 by James Humphreys of Philadelphia.

Until 1824, this was the only extant American edition of Wordsworth's poetry, and it followed the 1800 London edition of the text closely, differing only in Humphreys' addition of "The Convict" and in a slightly different arrangement of poems in the first volume.

Emerson's thoughts on Wordsworth's poetry begin with the disclosure that he has 'thirsted to abuse the poetical character of Mr Wordsworth whose poems have lately been read to me' (*JMN* 1:162). Emerson's desire to belittle Wordsworth's poetic talents and his poetry is apparent in the catalogue of diminution that his journal records. Emerson refers to Wordsworth as a 'poet of pismires,' describes his works as 'dwarfish' and the 'poetry of pigmies,' and likens the process of reading his poems to 'a man creeping about in palaces of Lilliput who maugre all the magnificence would fain be on his legs again' (*JMN* 1:162). Emerson's objection to Wordsworth's poems at this time appears to rest not on the quality of his writing, as Emerson is willing to admit at the very least 'the prettiness, the exquisite prettiness of his verses,' but rather Emerson's objections are a comment on the subject matter of Wordsworth's works (Ibid). Furthermore, even the prettiness of the Lake Poet's verse is ultimately rendered a harmful quality, and Emerson suggests that the superficial attractions of the poems serve only to mask the disagreeable nature of their content which for Emerson 'soon becomes intolerable' (Ibid).

The revelation of Emerson's early distaste for Wordsworth's poetry in his limited early contact with it reflects the general attitude toward Wordsworth's works in America at the time. Early nineteenth century American readers were defined by a general literary conservatism that impacted their opinion of

Wordsworth's poetry (Eckel, "American Encounters with Wordsworth," 2). Accustomed to the neoclassical formalism and the relatively conservative content of Enlightenment-era literature, Wordsworth's poetry, and British Romantic literature generally, was too radical for many readers. Joel Pace, for example, describes James Humphreys' decision to publish *Lyrical Ballads* in Philadelphia as a progressive one intended to continue his press's tradition of radical political engagement (Pace, "Wordsworth and America," 232).

To suggest, however, that America's literary conservatism in this period was unique ignores the wealth of British criticism that vocalised disapproval of Wordsworth's works and those of other Romantic writers. A lack of independent American literary criticism in the early nineteenth century rendered American readers and scholars dependent on British periodicals for opinions of the latest literary works, and thus they were familiar with negative appraisals of Wordsworth's poetry found within these publications (Eckel, 2). The lack of American editions of Wordsworth's work also played a large role in America's dependence on British critical opinions, as readers had little first-hand knowledge of Wordsworth's texts (Eckel, 2). Evidence of Emerson's reliance on British opinion in his assessments of Wordsworth's poetry, which remains decidedly negative throughout the 1820s, is found in an 1821 journal entry. In this entry, Emerson comments on Wordsworth's 'noted vulgarism or glaring false taste,' and the 'obtrusive deformity of his ideas' (*JMN* 1:282). His language in this instance is remarkably similar to that used by Francis Jeffrey in his review of Wordsworth's *Excursion* for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1814, which Emerson had added to a list of 'Books to be sought' catalogued in his journal between 1819 and 1821 (*JMN* 1, 27).

Joel Pace has noted that Emerson's initial readings of Wordsworth's texts generally appear 'nothing more than a repetition of Jeffrey's' ("'Gems of a Soft and Permanent Lustre'").[20]

The publication of an American edition of Wordsworth's *Poetical Works* in 1824 was a particularly significant and transformative event, marking the first American edition of Wordsworth's works since the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in Philadelphia in 1802 (Eckel, 2–3). The publication of *Poetical Works* allowed American readers the freedom to decide for themselves their opinion of Wordsworth's poetry, offering them a more complete vision of his poetic oeuvre than before (Pace "'Gems of a Soft and Permanent Lustre'"). As such, 1824 marks the beginning of a general evolution in American attitudes toward Wordsworth's poetry and a newfound freedom from the influence of British critical opinion (Ibid). In relation to Emerson more specifically, Leslie Eckel notes that after he obtained a copy of *Poetical Works* shortly after its publication, Emerson filled the book with annotations, becoming a 'committed student of [Wordsworth's] philosophy and phraseology' in a new and more complete way than during his time at Harvard (Eckel, 4).

Although 1824 marks a significant turning point in the rigour with which Emerson engages with Wordsworth's poetry, the American maintains his negative opinion of the poet in his journals throughout the final years of the 1820s. In a journal he kept between 1826 and 1827, for example, he compares and contrasts Wordsworth's 'mauling' of nature versus Milton's and Shakespeare's approach:

[20] As both Pace and Leslie Eckel have noted, Jeffrey's criticism and British critical opinion more generally played a significant role in shaping American opinion of Wordsworth's poetry in the early decades of the nineteenth century (Eckel, pp.2–3).

'[Wordsworth] mauls the moon & the waters & the bulrushes as his main business. Milton & Shakespeare touch them gently as illustrations or ornament' (*JMN* 3:39). Such an entry is in stark contrast to one from 1868 in which Emerson describes the experience of reading Wordsworth's poetry:

> I read with delight a casual notice of Wordsworth in the *London Reader*, in which, with prefect aplomb, his highest merits were affirmed, and his unquestionable superiority to all English poets since Milton, and thought how long I travelled and talked in England, and found no person, or none but one, and that one Clough, sympathetic with him, and admiring him aright, in face of Tennyson's culminating talent, and genius in melodious verse. (*Emerson in his* Journals, 524)

The shift in Emerson's opinion arrives in the 1830s and constitutes a reversal of his opinion regarding Wordsworth's philosophic talents – his ability to convey the music of humanity. Where earlier Wordsworth was a poet of pismires and a mauler of nature, by the mid-1830s he is a poet who '[moves] about in worlds not realized,' accessing a side of nature that poets cannot (*JMN* 5:134–5).

A passage from one of Emerson's journal entries from August 1837 perhaps best encapsulates his identification of Wordsworth's newfound philosophic value. Describing a catalogue of poets including Burns, Goldsmith, Cowper, Goethe, Carlyle and, among them, Wordsworth, Emerson defines their genius as follows:

> The secret of the scholar or intellectual man is that all nature is only the foliage, the flowering, & the fruit of the Soul and that every part therefore exists as emblem & sign, of some fact in the soul. (*JMN* 5:366)

Frank Thompson notes a link between Emerson's apparent change of heart regarding Wordsworth's poetry and his embrace of Coleridge's critical writing on Wordsworth's poetry, which he encountered in the late 1820s and engaged with thoroughly throughout the early 1830s, as seen in the previous chapter ("Emerson's Theory and Practice of Poetry" 1173). Linden Peach remarks similarly, noting the significance of the literary criticism contained in the *Biographia Literaria* specifically, among which is a defence of Wordsworth's poetry (54). Equally significant certainly is the development of Emerson's Romantic philosophy throughout the late 1820s and early 1830s. As the previous chapter demonstrated, the intellectual and spiritual developments in this era that inspired the development of Emerson's Romantic first philosophy also imbued him with a new respect for Coleridge's philosophical works and sparked Emerson's more rigorous engagement with them. The transitions in Emerson's engagement with and descriptions of Wordsworth's poetry appear to show a similar trend. As Emerson's own conceptualisation of the natural world and its relationship to man and to God coalesced into a more coherent and cohesive system throughout the late 1820s and the early 1830s, Emerson was better able to find value in Wordsworth's poetry and the philosophy contained within it (Moore 185).

Emerson's engagement with *The Excursion* specifically is an anomaly within the larger trends sketched above. Throughout the years in which one finds the most negative assessments of Wordsworth's poetry in Emerson's journals, the American writer nonetheless repeatedly turned to *The Excursion*. It is Wordsworth's 'choice of persons' that Emerson defends in a journal entry written in 1821, for example, a defence noted in the opening discussion of this chapter (*JMN* 1:271). In this journal

entry, Emerson acknowledges that Wordsworth's choice 'lays him open to ridicule,' but he defends the British poet nonetheless, relating Wordsworth's choice of subjects to the poet's design 'to take man where all mankind meet, above the reach of arbitrary distinctions of rank or fashion upon the ground of naked human nature' (Ibid). It would have been 'preposterous,' he continues, for Wordsworth 'to have introduced for the purposes of his philosophical dialogue the personages of heraldry' (Ibid). Elsewhere, Emerson remarks that 'there is nothing vulgar in Wordsworth's idea of Man' (*JMN* 5:163). In this regard, Emerson's opinion of *The Excursion* directly conflicts with several of Britain's prominent critics, and he would continue not only to defend Wordsworth's conception of and expression of humanity throughout his life, but would respond to this characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry enthusiastically as in the 1821 journal entry noted above (Peach 54).

Perhaps most enthusiastic is Emerson's assessment of the poem from May 1841, which, although it does not address Wordsworth's choice of persons, emphasises the value of the poem as an expression of Wordsworth's poetic and philosophic genius:

> Wordsworth's Excursion awakened in every lover of nature the right feeling. We saw stars shine, we felt the awe of mountains, we heard the rustle of the wind in the grass, & knew again the sweet secret of solitude. It was a great joy. It was nearer to nature & verse that more commanded nature than aught we had before. (*JMN* 7:362)

In 1841, directly prior to the publication of his second "Woodnotes" poem, *The Excursion* appears to be not only at the forefront of Emerson's mind, but Emerson's

appreciation for the poem is at its height. Such esteem is not without its anxieties, however, and Emerson again seeks to downplay the potency of an influential text. Directly following his assessment above, Emerson continues: 'But the promise [in *The Excursion*] was not fulfilled. The whole book was dull. There were gleams, the poetry ran in veins and did not pervade the man' (*JMN* 7:362).

It is here in 1841 that I will leave Wordsworth and *The Excursion* in Emerson's journals. The previous pages have demonstrated a significant shift in the American writer's opinion of Wordsworth's poetry and of his philosophic genius specifically, coinciding both with Emerson's decision to embark upon literary pursuits and consequently to further develop his Romantic first philosophy. Emerson's opinion of Wordsworth and his work changes as Emerson himself begins to consider the world through the eyes of a writer. As with the first expression of his philosophy in prose, in his first attempts to encapsulate his philosophy in poetry, Emerson turns to a model of the philosophical poet, Wordsworth, and to a model of philosophic verse, *The Excursion*. However, as in his engagement with *Aids to Reflection* in *Nature*, Emerson must detach from the thought and the expression with which he engages. The following discussion traces that engagement and detachment.

Wordsworthian Assimilations and Engagements in "Woodnotes I"

Engagement in the "Woodnotes" poems with Wordsworth's *Excursion* is most overtly manifest in the first of the two works, published in 1840 in *The Dial*, a

year before “Woodnotes II.” Emerson’s first “Woodnotes” poem is narrated by a figure to whom I will refer as the poet, and is a recollection of the poet’s friendship with an itinerant ‘musing peasant, lowly great’ (line 117). The first of the poem’s four stanzas opens with the poet’s general description of the qualities of the modern day ‘bard’ (line 2), twice referred to as a ‘Wonderer’ (lines 38, 39). ‘In the wood he travels glad’ (line 23), describes the poet; he is a ‘Planter of celestial plants’ (line 25) and one ‘Born out of time’ (line 3). The opening stanza serves to establish both the bard’s intimate relationship to the natural world and his status as a man outside of time and the society of men. Furthermore, the poet draws a connection between the two. The bard makes society of nature, he is the ‘Caesar’ of his own ‘leafy Rome’ (line 11) and is ‘at home’ (line 12) in a natural landscape of meadows, rivers, and woods. With the society of men, however, he ostensibly has little contact: ‘With none he has to do, / And none seeks him’ (lines 17–18). He is a man of knowledge, yet ‘What he knows nobody wants’ (lines 22, 27), a fact the poet emphasises through repetition of this phrase in this opening stanza. In the opening lines of the poem’s second stanza it is revealed that this description is not that of a bardic archetype, but of a real and remembered figure; ‘And such I knew, a forest seer’ (line 43). As such, the poet locates the bard or seer in a society of a different and more personal kind.

From only the first stanza, the parallels between Emerson’s first “Woodnotes” poem and *The Excursion*, particularly its opening Book, are almost immediately apparent. Most fundamentally, “Woodnotes I” is, like *The Excursion*, the self-conscious expression of a poet cum narrator and more specifically, a recollection. Furthermore, “Woodnotes I” is a recollection that centres on the

relationship between the poet and a socially nonconformist vagrant – a Wonderer – one who enjoys a special relationship to the natural world. This relationship overtly echoes that between the Wanderer and the Poet in Wordsworth's dramatic poem, and that of the Wanderer to nature, emphasised by the blatant connection to Wordsworth's character in the title of Wonderer ascribed to this unnamed forest seer.

The Excursion, too, is a recollected narrative that opens with the Poet's introduction of the Wanderer, an itinerant, modest man and former pedlar, one with 'Lowly' heart who is 'meek in gratitude' (1:236). The Poet, however, offers a far more detailed description of the Wanderer and of his background than the opening account of the forest seer given by Emerson's poet. After a brief description of the Wanderer on the summer day on which the Poet's recollection begins, the reader receives a full account of the Wanderer's biography and a truncated history of the Poet's relationship to him (1.108–433).

Like Emerson's bard, Wordsworth's Wanderer is a man intimate with nature. As a child, it was 'in the mountains [where] did he "feel" his faith' (line 226), and from a young age he 'learned / In oft-recurring hours of sober thought / To look on Nature with a humble heart' (1:239–241). The Wanderer's vagrancy grants him knowledge of the ways of men, 'Their manner, their enjoyments, and pursuits, / Their passions, and their feelings…' (1:342–343), and he is one who turns the 'constant disposition of his thoughts / To sympathy with man…' (1:363–364). The Wanderer's itinerancy places him outside of traditional society, a position from which he is knowledgeable of its cruelty – the 'rough sports / and teasing ways of children' (1:415). However, he is defined throughout these opening stanzas by his

relationships to individuals and, like the itinerant figure of Emerson's poem, participates in a society of a more personal kind: 'Indulgent listener was he to the tongue / Of garrulous age; nor did the sick man's tale, / To his fraternal sympathy addressed, / Obtain reluctant hearing' (1:416–419).

Returning again to "Woodnotes I," the second stanza establishes an additional parallel between the forest seer and the Wanderer of *The Excursion*. While the poet spoke in general terms in the first stanza, in the second, he reveals more about the nature of the relationship of the "Wonderer" to the natural world. The first few lines reinforce the visionary qualities of this forest seer, referring to the peasant as a 'foreteller' (line 45) and a 'harbinger' (line 46), and establishing the natural quality of his vision. He is a foreteller specifically 'of the vernal ides' (line 45), and a harbinger 'of spheres and tides' (line 46). The peasant's visionary quality derives from his intimate knowledge of the natural world, that which in turn issues from his fundamental love for and appreciation of nature; it is because he is 'A lover true' that he knows 'by heart / Each joy the mountain dales impart' (line 47–48). This knowledge also derives, according to Emerson's poet, from nature's active revelation of her secrets. Nature yields to the peasant 'all her shows' (line 65) in order 'To please and win this pilgrim wise' (line 66).

In stark contrast to the solitary portrait painted in the poem's opening stanza, in stanza two of "Woodnotes I," the peasant's relationship to yielding nature is described as something that involves him in a community. In place of fellow man, the peasant enjoys the society of the natural world:

It seemed that Nature could not raise

A plant in any secret place,

In quaking bog, on snowy hill,

Beneath the grass that shades the rill

Under the snow, between the rocks,

In damp fields known to bird and fox,

But he would come in the very hour

It opened up its virgin bower

As if a sunbeam showed the place,

And tell its long-descended race.

It seemed as if the breezes brought him;

It seemed as if the sparrows taught him;

As if by secret sight he knew

Where, in the far fields, the orchis grew. (lines 49–62)

In the poet's perception, the natural world plays an active role in the peasant's visionary capabilities, bringing, teaching, and showing him her secrets. The reason for this apparent generosity derives from the fact that the peasant is a 'lover' of nature, and he is a lover not only because he appreciates the world, but also because his appreciation is accompanied by an attitude to nature distinguished from that of others.

In the poem's first stanza, for example, the poet notes that when the peasant approaches nature 'Not hook nor line hath he / He stands in the meadow wide, -- / Nor gun nor scythe to see' (lines 14–16). It is the revelation in the first stanza that the peasant approaches nature with respect and reverence, not looking to take or profit from it, which enables the active, helpful nature found in stanza

two. The poem's third stanza to which I will now turn, further develops the significance of this mutual respect by developing its antithesis.

The third stanza of "Woodnotes I" opens with the poet's recounting of the peasant's previous visit to Maine. '[U]nploughed' (line 75) and 'unplanted' (line 77), these New England woods are untouched by the visible effects of civilisation and traditional society, save for a 'lumberers' gang' (line 75). The poet describes the peasant's journey through the Maine woods evocatively and the stanza is replete with the sounds, sights, and smells of the forest. The poet's engagement of the senses and his description of the peasant's peaceful immersion in the natural world are both abruptly interrupted, however, by the introduction of a 'sudden roar' (line 86), revealed to be the 'death-hymn of the perfect tree' (line 87).

Michael Gilmore has noted that the period between 1837 and 1843, into which both "Woodnotes" poems fall, marks that in which Emerson was at his most outspoken regarding the modern capitalist economy (19). Emerson engaged with economic change and its effects on society in various texts throughout this period, including "Wealth," "Man the Reformer," and "The Transcendentalist." Emerson's interest in such topics is unsurprising given the coincidence of the American Romantic period with the country's transformation from a mostly local, agrarian economy toward new, grander scales of enterprise marked by a drive for 'gain rather than self-sufficiency' (Gilmore 2). It is a critique of gain, or of what James McKusick calls 'rampant commodity fetishism,' that we find in stanza three of "Woodnotes I" and indeed there is an implicit critique throughout the poem of commodifying approaches to the natural world (*Green Writing* 121). The gun,

scythe, and fishing rod of stanza one, for example, are not solely instruments of hostility but also of commodity (Strauch 163).

It is because the peasant is a 'Lover of all things alive' (line 37), a peasant and a seer, rather than someone who commodifies and takes, that he enjoys nature's 'resistless friendship' (line 141). In this way, the peasant's relationship to nature conforms well to James McKusick's reading of Emerson's "The Transcendentalist," a lecture Emerson first delivered in 1842, two years following the publication of "Woodnotes I." Of this text, McKusick writes that Emerson presents an account of the natural world in which 'nature does not exist merely for the purposes of human consumption,' but rather, 'exists for its own purposes' (136). If it is approached, as McKusick describes, 'in a spirit of humility,' nature 'can teach us lessons' (Ibid). For McKucisk, Emerson's transcendental thought is also 'a mode of ecological thought' insofar as it 'beholds the Earth as a community of living things' (Ibid). Such a reading certainly rings true in relation to the social account of the relationship between the peasant and the natural world presented in "Woodnotes I."

In its incorporation of an intertwined critique of economic and ecological changes, and in its depiction of the natural world as a kind of community, "Woodnotes I" aligns thematically with *The Excursion*. Wordsworth incorporates protoecological thought into the poem through remarks by the Wanderer in the poem's eighth Book, in which he refers to the disappearance of the wild, natural landscape as an effect of industrial advancements and urbanisation, the 'darker side / Of this great change' (8:151–152). His intimate knowledge of the English landscape renders him particularly cognizant of change, and he also notes that

recently ‘wheresoe’er the traveller turns his steps, / He sees the barren wilderness erased, / Or disappearing…’ (8:128 –130). Rather than the similarities between ecological or protoecological critiques present in both poems, however, the most convincing parallel is the presence of critique at all. I would argue that Emerson incorporates this element into “Woodnotes I” in emulation of Wordsworth’s example.

However, Emerson’s critique of economic changes and their effect on the landscape is admittedly disparate from the aspects of change presented critically in *The Excursion* and in Wordsworth’s poetry more generally. Wordsworth populates *The Excursion* with the low and common subjects that Emerson defends in 1821 in order to facilitate an interrogationg of poverty, that which is in turn linked in early nineteenth century England to the politics of reform, war, and the industrial revolution (Harrison 16). Although Margaret is a peripheral character in the poem, her story constitutes a large part of the poem’s first Book and incorporates all these elements of change. The Solitary’s story, too, coalesces many of these themes, while the Wanderer’s itinerant nature and rural beginnings combine two characteristics typical of Wordsworthian subjects.

A central feature of the conception of the Romantic triad offered by the Wanderer in Wordsworth’s poem, an element of the text about which I have yet to speak at length, is the notion of community. The parallels in the conception of the triad that the Wanderer presents to the reader in *The Excursion*, particularly in the poem’s fourth and ninth Books, and Emerson’s understanding of nature’s value more generally, are several, because Wordsworth held a conception of nature’s spiritual value congenial to Emerson’s. In the Preface to *The Excursion*, for example,

Wordsworth's account of the natural world clearly parallels Emerson's own conception as outlined in his first philosophy. In the Preface to the poem, which contains 'a kind of *Prospectus* of the design' of the larger work, *The Recluse*, of which *The Excursion* was meant to be only a part,' Wordsworth notes how '…the individual Mind [. . .] to the external World / Is fitted' and, later, that 'The external world is fitted to the Mind' (*The Excursion* iv). Such a definition is reflected in the Wanderer's understanding of the natural world in *The Excursion*, epitomised in declarations such as that made by the Wanderer in Book Nine: 'To every Form of being is assigned … / An *active* Principle' (9:1–3; original emphasis). Stephen Gill notes, for example, that this declaration recalls lines from "Tintern Abbey" as well as the early *Prelude* (142). These resonances lead Gill to describe the Wanderer as the figure in *The Excursion* 'through [whom] speaks Wordsworth the Sage,' echoing the interpretations of numerous scholars before and since himself (142).

The resonances with Emerson's own conception of nature's spiritual value are also striking. However, while certainly at least in part a Wordsworthian inheritance, as Patrick Keane's *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason* so extensively traces, it is not with the Wanderer's account of the relationship between nature, mind, and spirit – the traditionally conceived Romantic triad – that Emerson engages with in the "Woodnotes" poems. Emerson engages in the "Woodnotes" poems with the conception of a triad of categories in *The Excursion*, but it is one that Thomas McFarland calls the 'Wordsworthian triad' (*William Wordsworth: Intensity and Achievement* 121). What McFarland refers to in these terms is the triad of categories that Wordsworth references twice in the Preface to *The Excursion* as 'Man, Nature, and Society' in the first instance and later, in slightly

revised terms, as man, nature and 'Human Life' (*The Excursion* ii, iii). Wordsworth's substitution of society for God is incomplete in *The Excursion* and the poem maintains the divinity of the human mind and of nature present in other poems in Wordsworth's oeuvre (McFarland 121). Nonetheless, Wordsworth includes in *The Excursion* an emphasis on community and on public life that filters even into the descriptions of the natural world presented by the Wanderer.

Ralph Pite's essay, "Wordsworth and the Natural World"(2003), observes that the Wanderer's descriptions of the natural world in Book Fourth of the poem emphasise community among both inanimate and living natural objects (Ibid). The Wanderer describes, for example, how 'living things, and things inanimate, / Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear, / And speak to social reason's inner sense, / With inarticulate language' (4:1204–1207; quoted Pite 188). Of these lines, Pite writes:

> The living and the inanimate things of nature all "speak to social reason's inner sense" because they exhibit sociality themselves, at all levels from the smallest to the largest from the "craggy regions" to "The tiny creatures strong by social league", to "the mute company of changeful clouds" and as high as "The mild assemblage of the starry heavens." (Ibid)[21]

The sociality of natural objects extends, too, to an individual like the Wanderer, who communes with nature; in the natural world this individual finds 'objects of a kindred love' (4:1216). Through an apprehension of nature and its community, the individual is incorporated into a larger, spiritual society, as expressed by the

[21] All of the lines to which Pite refers are from Book Fourth of *The Excursion*.

Wanderer in his ‘calmly’ spoken but nonetheless emphatic opening lines to the poem’s ninth and final Book:

> ‘To every Form of being is assigned,’
> Thus calmly spake the venerable Sage,
> ‘An “active” Principle: -- howe’er removed
> From sense and observation, it subsists
> In all things, in all natures; in the stars
> Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
> In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
> That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
> The moving waters, and the invisible air.
> Whate’er exists hath properties that spread
> Beyond itself, communicating good
> A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
> Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
> No chasm, *no solitude*; *from link to link*
> *It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.*’ (9:1–15; emphasis added)

In *The Excursion*, one’s community connection or mental ‘fittedness’ to nature is inherently spiritual. However, the narrative comprised of the Solitary’s transition from “Despondency” to “Despondency Corrected,” that which is arguably the central narrative of the poem, evidences the insufficiency of this aspect of community alone (Risinger 440). That is to say, the natural world alone is insufficient to sustain the mental stability on which the apprehension of the mind’s fittedness to nature and nature’s fittedness to the mind is predicated.

The society to which Wordsworth's revised triad refers, and that which offers an answer to nature's insufficiency, is society between man and fellow man. Playing a constitutive role in the delineation of Wordsworth's revised triad and the importance of human life is the dramatic element of *The Excursion*. It is from Wordsworth's emphasis on human society that Emerson departs, and he does so through his engagement with Wordsworth's dramatic form. Introducing this dramatic formal element in the fourth stanza of "Woodnotes I," Emerson maintains it into the second poem, although with a different speaker. It is this shift in speaker from that of the peasant in the final stanza of "Woodnotes I" to that of an animate pine tree in "Woodnotes II" by which Emerson detaches from Wordsworth and his poem and this shift is emphasised by a transition in the conception of the Romantic triad found between the two poems.

'Loss of confidence in social man': Society Conversation, and the Wordsworthian Triad in *The Excursion*

Don Bialostosky, writing of Wordsworth's poems in *Lyrical Ballads*, defines them dialogically in two senses of the word. 'In the first sense,' he writes, '…they report dialogue in narrative diction' (107). More interesting in Bialostosky's understanding, however, is the second sense of the word: the poems are dialogic

> …because they continue the dialogue they report. The narrators, that is, relate these anecdotes in response to the exchange of words in which they have been involved and so continue the dialogue after the other party is no longer present. (Ibid)

Invited to participate in this dialogue is the reader him or herself who, in reading the poems, is confronted not only with multiple perspectives but is also tasked with judging and interpreting them (Ibid). John Danby identifies a similar element in the *Lyrical Ballads*, expressing it more concisely as a 'presence of alternatives' in which the reader's active engagement is necessitated (37). It is the presence of alternatives that Sally Bushell's thorough *Re-Reading The Excursion* (2002) concerns.

Bushel opens her study of *The Excursion* with Wordsworth's claim in the Preface to *The Excursion* that it is not his 'intention formally to announce a system,' but instead to convey through 'clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings' a message from which that reader 'will have no difficulty…extracting the system for himself' (*The Excursion* ii). From this position, Bushell disputes the prevalent interpretation of the poem as a theodicy demonstrating how *The Excursion* instead establishes the framework for moral exploration and development in the 'relationships between men, the connections created by sharing in others' lives literally, or through narrative' (Busgell 91).

Bialostosky's, Danby's, and Bushell's readings of Wordsworth's poetry share between them an interest in the effects on the reader of the various perspectives Wordsworth offers in his embrace of a dialogic or dramatic form. What the following exploration of Wordsworth's poem considers, however, is the fact that the poem's dramatic element also offers an example of the active process of interpretative engagement and judgment in which the reader is implicated. The Solitary's biography and his spiritual revival, effected by the conversations in the poem, answer the question of how one moves from Despondency to Despondency

Corrected when nature is insufficient. *The Excursion* presents a process that John Risinger aptly terms 'conversion through conversation' (435).

That nature is presented in *The Excursion* as insufficient to sustain mental fitness (and therefore fittedness) was noted briefly on page 115. The Solitary has lived in isolation in the splendour of the natural world for years, and yet remains decidedly despondent. What the Wanderer offers in Book Fourth of the poem, "Despondency Corrected," is a multifaceted account of what the Solitary requires to move out of his despondent state. This account opens with an address to his friend's lack of faith. There is only 'One adequate support / For the calamities of mortal life,' says the Wanderer:

> …an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good. (4.10–11; 12–17)

Having established the primary necessity of faith in God in his opening statements, the Wanderer expounds on a secondary requirement: appreciation of and immersion in symbolic nature. The Solitary, surrounded by nature, resides in a church of God: 'In such a temple as we now behold / Reared for thy presence: therefore, am I bound / To worship, here, and everywhere' (4.44–46). Both living nature and 'things inanimate,' according to the Wanderer, 'Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear, / And speak to social reason's inner sense, / With inarticulate language' (4.1204–1207). Through an acknowledgement and

appreciation of nature's symbolic significance, and a foundational faith in God, the Solitary will apprehend the universe's 'transcendent truths' (4.96): that 'thou, thou alone / Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits, / Which thou includest, as the sea her waves: / For adoration thou endur'st' (4.91–94).

What the Solitary lacks, however, is 'social reason'; as such, the natural world by which he is surrounded has no effect. What he requires for the re-establishment of faith, according to Wordsworth's system, is the society of man, the presentation of ideas and perspectives that is regenerative and from which he can extract his own congenial understanding of the world around him. The Wanderer's speech in "Despondency Corrected" does not cure the Solitary, but is the start of the process by which, over the next five books of Wordsworth's poem, he undergoes a conversion through conversation.

The Solitary shares in a dialogue with the Poet, the Wanderer, and, later, the Pastor, throughout which he is presented with numerous peripheral accounts of the world through the stories that these men share. In this presentation of varying perspectives, no single view takes precedence over the other – a quality highlighted by the poem's dialogic structure (Hickey 14). The Solitary's despondency and subsequent faithlessness were always located centrally in his 'loss of confidence in social man' (4.261), and through engagement or conversation it is redressed.

Just as Wordsworth refuses to provide the reader with a single, unified, and coherent philosophical system, the varying perspectives offered by the Pastor, Poet, and Wanderer allow the Solitary to extract his own spiritual system. And if there is any doubt that the Solitary's conversion, or the 're-giving' of his soul, through conversation is successful, one need only turn to the poem's final lines,

where the Poet reassures the reader of the reformatory and renovating qualities of the preceding dialogue:

> From this communion with uninjured Minds,
> What renovation had been brought; and what
> Degree of healing to a wounded spirit,
> Dejected, and habitually disposed
> To seek, in degradation of the Kind,
> Excuse and solace for her own defects;
> How far these erring notions were reformed;
> And whether aught, of tendency as good
> And pure, from further intercourse ensued;
> This -- if delightful hopes, as heretofore,
> Inspire the serious song, and gentle Hearts
> Cherish, and lofty Minds approve the past - -
> My future labours may not leave untold. (9.783–796)

The Solitary's successful spiritual renovation and character reformation speaks to the necessity of a social element in man's relationship to God, one predicated on a spiritual transition from the individual 'I' to the collective 'we'. David Bromwich identifies a similar transition in Wordsworth's Immortality Ode, and one that corresponds to a similar grammatical transition in the poem. Bromwich demonstrates that this grammatical transition is driven at least in part by the poem's spiritual subject, revealing a 'progressively unfolding understanding of the individual's mutual attachment to others in society' (204). Specifically, this attachment is a realisation of one's moral duties and obligations to the community,

a subordination of the individual to the community in regard to moral education (Ibid). In the Immortality Ode, the personal connection to God that the individual enjoys in childhood cannot be replaced, nor can the brilliance of its illumination be replicated, but guidance through moral revelation might still be enjoyed through an understanding of one's connection to fellow man. This illuminating collective morality – the 'light of common day' (line 77) – is faded divinity, but through it one nonetheless maintains a connection to God.

A similar transitional narrative to that recorded in Wordsworth's Ode is found in the first book of *The Excursion*. As in the Ode, the transition is a spiritual one from the individual 'I' to the collective 'we' that attends one's transition from childhood to adulthood. The Poet, recounting the Wanderer's life to the reader, describes his childhood as having often been spent alone in nature, and he 'all alone/ Beheld the stars come out above his head, / And travelled through the wood, with no one near, / To whom he might confess the things he saw' (1.127–131). It is in his solitude in the wilderness of Athol that '…he had felt the power / Of Nature, and already was prepared, / By his intense conceptions, to receive / Deeply the lesson deep of love…' (1.191–194). It is in these early childhood years that the individual 'I' appears to reign supreme. The restlessness of his youth soon takes hold, however, and the Wanderer leaves his homeland to become a travelling merchant. Although his time is often still spent in solitude, it is during this period that the Wanderer experiences the collective 'we' of man: 'Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits, / Their passions and their feelings; chiefly those / Essential and eternal in the heart' (1.342–344).

However, while the Poet's narrative of the Wanderer's life appears to recount a movement from a childhood spent in the solitude of nature to an itinerant and *social* life in nature, a collective moral and spiritual influence is in fact present throughout all stages of the Wanderer's biography. Rather than a transition, the Poet's narrative explores the way in which the I and the we are in constant interaction or, perhaps more accurately, asserts that in ideal circumstances they are in constant interaction.

Firstly, while the Wanderer experienced nature in solitude during his formative years, the Poet also reveals that he was raised in 'virtuous household, though exceeding poor!' and as a result, the Wanderer and his siblings were taught 'stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word, / And habitual piety' (1.112, 115–116). Additionally, one of the effects of the Wanderer's solitary explorations of nature is an awareness and openness to his fellow man; in his youth, the Poet describes how 'His heart lay open; and by nature tuned / And constant disposition of his thoughts / To sympathy with man, he was alive' (1.362–364). Lastly, is the revelation that spiritual and moral guidance was a constant presence in the Wanderer's early life, not only through the influence of his family, but through the influence of institutionalised religion:

> The Scottish Church, both on himself and those
> With whom from childhood he grew up, had held
> The strong hand of her purity; and still
> Had watched him with an unrelenting eye.
> This he remembered in his riper age
> With gratitude, and reverential thoughts. (1.397–402)

In contrast to the transition in the Immortality Ode from an individual relationship to God and morality in childhood to a collective relationship to God and morality in adulthood, *The Excursion* presents a story of maturation that insists on the necessity of moral education that is both subjective and individual as well as didactic and collective. The lack of apparent anxiety in relation to this transition is explained by the fact that there is, in fact, no transition; the we of community has for our representative character, the Wanderer, been present from the start.

'Let thy friends be as the dead in doom': Society and 'Conversation' in "Woodnotes II"

"Woodnotes I" is increasingly revelatory of both the intimacy of the poet's relationship to the wondering peasant, and the nature of that relationship. The poem opens with the poet's description of an archetype, progressing in the second stanza to a depiction of the Wonderer himself, revealing the presence of a personal relationship between the poem's narrator and the peasant about whom he speaks (And such I *knew*, a forest seer). In stanza three, the poet recounts an event for which he was not present, the peasant's journey to Maine and his witnessing of the felling of a pine tree. This revelation alludes to a dialogue between the two, but this dialogue is not made explicit. Finally, in the poem's fourth stanza, the poet recalls an encounter with the Wonderer in which the poet transcribes the words of the peasant. The peasant speaks, as it were, for the first time.

Throughout "Woodnotes I," the nature of the poet's relationship to the peasant is illustrated to be one of mentorship and guidance. It is a relationship in

which the poet actively and earnestly participates, asking questions of the peasant, as is revealed in the final stanza. Throughout the poem, the poet's lack of clarity regarding the peasant's relationship to nature is indicated in the preponderance of modal vocabulary – nature always 'seemed as if,' it never 'was' or 'did.' In the fourth stanza, the poet seeks clarity, asking the wonderer to explain his unique and mysterious relationship to the natural world. In answering, for the first time the peasant speaks:

> "You ask," he said, "what guide
> Me through trackless thickets led,
> Through thick-stemmed woodlands rough and wide? –
> I found the water's bed
> The watercourses were my guide;
> I travelled grateful by their side,
> Or through their channel dry
> They led me through the thicket damp,
> Through brake and fern, the beavers' camp,
> Through beds of granite cut my road,
> And their resistless friendship showed.
> The falling waters led me,
> The foodful waters fed me,
> And brought me to the lowest land,
> Unerring to the ocean sand.
> The moss upon the forest bark
> Was polestar when the night was dark;

The purple berries in the wood

Supplied me necessary food;

For Nature ever faithful is

To such as trust her faithfulness.

When the forest shall mislead me,

When the night and morning lie,

When sea and land refuse to feed me,

'Twill be time enough to die;

Then will yet my mother yield

A pillow in her greenest field,

Nor the June flowers scorn to cover

The clay of their departed lover. (lines 131–159)

As in previous descriptions of the natural world, the landscape in which the peasant travels is described as helpful and active; it guides, feeds, and shelters him. As such, in his reply to the poet, the peasant appears to locate the value of the natural world firmly in the phenomenal realm, a world of physical objects. As Carl Strauch notes, however, the water imagery in the poet's speech is suggestive of spiritual liberation, and the conclusion of these lines in the prospective death of the peasant, underscores this reading (166).

The undercurrent of spirituality and metaphysicality in this final stanza is in fact present throughout the poem. Although it is never overt, throughout "Woodnotes I" the poet alludes throughout the poem to the spiritual nature of the peasant's relationship to the landscape he inhabits. Many of these instances have been noted above, although without calling attention to their spiritual undertones.

In the first stanza, for example, the poet refers to the peasant as a 'planter of celestial plants' (line 26) and in stanza two he is a 'pilgrim' (line 66). It is at the end of stanza three, however, that the poet describes the spiritual nature of the peasant's relationship most overtly, albeit modal vocabulary still shrouds the description in uncertainty: 'Go where he will, the wise man is at home, / His hearth the earth, - his hall the azure dome; / Where his clear spirit leads him, there's his road, / By God's own light illumined and foreshadowed' (lines 105–108).

Having become increasingly more aware of the nature of the peasant's relationship to the world around him, in stanza four, the poet is ready for confirmation, and asks the peasant to clarify. The answer he receives is not the explicit reply of the Wanderer to the Solitary's despondency in which the spiritual value of the natural world is unambiguously asserted. However, "Woodnotes I" delineates a preparation, the establishing of a groundwork through the indirect spiritual guidance of the peasant. The poet is, by the end of the fourth stanza, prepared to undertake a more intimate union with the world around him, and that union is the subject of the second "Woodnotes" poem. The peasant has shown rather than told the poet, led him by anecdote and example, and by the final stanza of the poem has helped transform the poet into a wonderer of nature; this wondering is a preparation for a higher state of knowledge (Tuerk).

Between them, the "Woodnotes" poems, like *Nature*, present an ascending account of the relationship between man and the natural world. The metaphysical undercurrent of the first poem is akin to the first stirrings of the eye of reason as the faculty of the understanding, that which is related to the physical, tangible elements of nature, begins to be surpassed. That the peasant has performed a

pivotal role in guiding the poet to this moment of transition ostensibly illustrates a similar emphasis in the first "Woodnotes" poem on what the Wanderer calls man's 'social reason.' That is to say, like Wordsworth, Emerson seems to emphasise the necessity of community, and not only that provided by nature, but also that which is offered by one's confidence in fellow man. As in *The Excursion*, Emerson defines this man narrowly as one who exists outside of normal society and in communion with the natural world. A distinguishing factor between Emerson's vision of society and that in *The Excursion*, however, is the peasant's aforementioned aversion to pontification, his preference for showing rather than telling.

"Woodnotes I" centres not on the peasant's explanation of nature's spiritual significance, but on the poet's personal journey toward the recognition of that significance through observation of the peasant's relationship to nature, through stories like that shared in stanza three, and through the peasant's opaque replies to the poet's questions like that featured in stanza four. If *The Excursion* is a demonstration of conversion through conversation, then "Woodnotes I" is a preparation through both conversation and demonstration. No conversion has been effected, but the poet is readied for what is revealed in "Woodnotes II."

In eight stanzas, "Woodnotes II" records the narrator's encounter with an animate pine tree, although the presence of the narrator is indicated only by three interstitial lines in which the poet reveals the narrative to be a recollection of their 'conversation.' Apart from twice stating 'Quoth the pine-tree' (lines 3, 47) and again interrupting in the fifth stanza to state that 'Once again the pine-tree sung' (line 188), the poet is silent. The second "Woodnotes" poem continues the ascending pattern of the first, building from the foundation of spiritual, social nature on which

"Woodnotes I" closed. Although the poem begins rooted in the physical world, with the first stanza reading as a catalogue of various natural objects, the fact that the speaker is a pine tree and the poet, as such, is *listening* to nature rather than wondering about it, presumes a level of intimacy not seen in "Woodnotes I".

In stanza three, ocular metaphor predominates as the poet's eye of reason first begins to open and, through his communion with nature's speaker, the pine tree, he apprehends for the first time the social element in the natural world about which he could only speculate in "Woodnotes I." Privy now to the 'triumphant piercing sight' (line 112) that comes when one 'loves' but does not 'adulate' nature (line 109), he understands for the first time the society that she offers: 'The mounting sap, the shells, the sea, / All spheres, all stones, his helpers be' (lines 110–111). Crucially, this society with nature comes when one quits all other kinds:

> Whoso walketh in solitude,
> And inhabiteth the wood,
> Choosing light, wave, rock, and bird,
> Before the money-loving herd,
> Into that forester shall pass,
> From these companions, power and grace. (lines 101–106)

With the necessity of solitude established, and the eye of reason first beginning to open, the pine tree's message continues, and in the next stanza, ocular metaphor is traded for auditory language as the pine tree's message transitions into a song. Where his earlier speech indicated the sociality of nature, this more transcendent, 'mystic song' (line 153) reveals to the poet that social nature is nothing more than a dream:

To the open ear it sings

Sweet the genesis of things,

Of tendency through endless ages,

Of star-dust and pilgrimages,

Of rounded worlds, of space and time,

Of the old flood's subsiding slime,

Of chemic matter, force, and form,

Of poles and powers, cold, wet, and warm:

The rushing metamorphosis,

Dissolving all that fixture is,

Melts things that be to things that seem,

And solid nature to a dream. (lines 158–170)

That the spiritual message has progressed from the sociality of nature to something more is apparent. Nature cannot offer community here, because it is only a dream. The poet is stopped short of transcendence, however, tied yet to space and to time, to cold, wet, and warm.

Stanza five brings a new caveat to transcendence, one that informs the poet's ascent. Here, the pine tree commands that he 'Speak not [his] speech my boughs among' (line 189), and instead to listen with open ears to nature's song which 'Understands the universe' (line 198). With this, the poet is prepared for the final precondition for transcendence, an embrace not only of solitude but a rejection of all society:

I see thee in the crowd alone;

I will be thy companion.

Quit thy friends as the dead in doom,

And build to them a final tomb;

Let the starred shade that nightly falls

Still celebrate their funerals,

And the bell of beetle and of bee

Knell their melodious memory.

Behind thee leave thy merchandise,

Thy churches, and thy charities…. (lines 282–291)

Finally, without speech and only nature's song as his guide, the poet is prepared for an understanding of that third significant question asked in *Nature*: 'Whereto is matter?'.

As in *Nature*, the answer to this question is transcendence. A final time, the pine tree asks the poet to 'Hearken!' (line 313) revealing the world to be nothing more than a 'divine improvisation / [That] from the heart of God proceeds' (lines 325–326), and in an echo of Emerson's *Nature*, locates God 'in pure transparency' (line 375).

The ascent that the pine tree traces is from the opening of the eye of reason to a conception of transcendence, although not a vision of it, as in the "Prospects" chapter of *Nature*. Integral to this ascent are the increasing calls to leave behind the world of men and all its trappings. It is only after the poet quits the world of men, ceases to speak, and listens to the song of nature alone, that he reaches a full understanding of nature's transcendent spiritual value. This is not a conversation but an open ear, and one that listens not to the words of other men, but to nature's woodnotes.

In comparing the second "Woodnotes" poem to Wordsworth's conception of the Romantic triad generally, Joseph Beach declares Wordsworth to have a 'more *human* point of view than Emerson' (368; original emphasis). Wordsworth, he says, 'is primarily concerned with the way man has built up his spiritual life out of the inspirations of nature' (Ibid). Given the exploration of *The Excursion* conducted above, to Beach's interpretation I would add that Wordsworth, in this later poem, is interested not only in the inspirations of nature, but additionally and more so, he is interested in the inspirations of fellow man. The contrast between Emerson's view of the world in the "Woodnotes" poems and Wordsworth's in *The Excursion* is in fact that it is Emerson who insists that spiritual life be built from nature and from nature alone, while Wordsworth's more human point of view declares nature alone to be insufficient. In engaging with the dramatic element in Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Emerson first posits spiritual growth as a conversation with fellow man, only to abandon that for what R.A. Yoder aptly describes as a 'question-and-answer encounter between the poet and nature' (120).

'There lives no man of Nature's worth / In the Circle of the Earth'

In the "Woodnotes" poems, Emerson's intellectual and creative detachment from Wordsworth is established through his revision of the dramatic or dialogic element in *The Excursion*. In both Wordsworth's poem and Emerson's texts, this dramatic element plays a constitutive role, informing the account of the Romantic

triad found in the works. For Wordsworth, the conversion through conversation that occurs in *The Excursion* exemplifies his redefined social or "Wordsworthian" triad. Nature, insufficient to '"keep" / Heights which the soul is competent to gain' (lines 138–139), must be attended by participation in human life and specifically, rural and humble life, rather than that of the city.

What Beach calls Wordsworth's 'more human point of view' is ostensibly found in "Woodnotes I" in the relationship between the poet and the peasant, a relationship that clearly echoes and parallels that of the Poet and the Wanderer in *The Excursion* (368). Like Wordsworth's Wanderer, Emerson's Wonderer guides the poet spiritually, revealing to him the true value of the natural world. Specifically, the wondering (and wandering) peasant leads the poet to a transitional moment – to the moment of the eye of reason's first stirrings. Although "Woodnotes I" presents a conversation of sorts between two figures, it is not a true dialogue and furthermore, the peasant's instruction or guidance is by example and anecdote rather than a didactic narrative like that found in "Despondency Corrected." As shown above, the poet's true dialogue and the only one of note in the account of the world presented ascendingly across the two "Woodnotes" poems, is his dialogue with the natural world. More accurately, in fact, Emerson presents an account of the triad in which man does not *converse* with nature, but instead listens.

Engaging with the dramatic element present in *The Excursion*, Emerson turns the notion of conversion through conversation on its head in "Woodnotes II," ostensibly presenting the song of nature as a dialogue. In this song, the

preconditions for a recognition of nature's spiritual value are an open ear and silent tongue, and not only a quitting of the city for rural life, but extreme self-reliance from all forms and symbols of society from merchandise to religion, to fellow man. The pine tree is most explicit when he states, 'There lives no man of Nature's worth / In the circle of the earth' (lines 255–256). Using a formal element from Wordsworth's poem against him, as it were, Emerson performs his central detachment from the British writer's poetic influence and, more specifically, his influence as a philosophic poet.

As in *Nature*, Emerson's confrontation of and performance of detachment from the personal influence wielded by Wordsworth is attended by an attention to notions of nation. Yoder has referred to the forester of the first "Woodnotes" poem as a 'specifically American hero,' and it is true that the landscape to which this figure is tied in "Woodnotes I" is firmly rooted in an American landscape, that of New England more specifically. Turning the British critique of the American backwoodsman into a positive, Emerson presents the rural peasant as a spiritual guide and model. However, it is in "Woodnotes II" in which Emerson launches his most potent and explicit defence against British taunts of historical and cultural lack. Again, transcendence, the goal of the individual's self-reliant interaction with nature, is defined temporally (and spatially) as an eradication of the past through emphasis on the present and on the moment. Man without reason is man 'misplaced, mistimed' (line 236) and a 'fool of space and time' (line 194). By way of contrast, the song that nature sings is one outside of time, older than it (line 280), and a witness to its alternative, eternity (line 371).

As in *Nature*, Emerson combines what Weisbuch terms vertical time and futurism, and an emphasis on the power of the present moment to render the world transparent is attended by an emphasis on a prospective future. That is to say, the immediacy or proximity of the pine tree's vision,

> [God] *is* the essence that inquires.
>
> He *is* the axis of the star;
>
> He *is* the heart of every creature;
>
> He *is* the meaning of each feature;
>
> And his mind *is* the sky,
>
> Than all it holds more deep, more high. (lines 377–383; emphasis added)

is joined by an emphasis on its future revelation to us. This futurism is made clear from the poem's opening stanza, in which the pine tree looks forward to a day when

> …once again
>
> O'er the grave of men
>
> We shall talk to each other again,
>
> Of the old age behind,
>
> Of the time out of mind,
>
> Which shall come again. (lines 35–40)

These temporal reimaginings in part constitute Emerson's confrontation of the specifically national influence that Wordsworth as a British writer wields, and of British influence more generally. These rethinkings are attended, however, by a far more overt confrontation and attempted nullification of America's cultural lack, tied again to notions of futurism.

In the poem's third stanza, the pine tree locates prospective visionary capabilities in an explicitly American landscape. More specifically, he locates this vision in the natural prospect represented by the Edenic promise of the Western frontier:

> Westward I ope the forest gates,
>
> The train along the railroad skates;
>
> It leaves the land behind like ages past,
>
> The foreland flows to it in river fast;
>
> Missouri I have made a mart,
>
> I teach Iowa Saxon art. (lines 83–88) [22]

Later, the pine tree will not emphasise American prospects but rather the insufficiency of other models, and specifically those of language, cataloguing predominately Western European examples rendered null by nature's universal tongue:

[22] The echoes in line 84 of the extract of Wordsworth's ice skating scene in *The Prelude* are worth noting, if only in passing.

My branches speak Italian,

English, German, Basque, Castilian,

Mountain speech to Highlanders,

Ocean tongues to islanders,

To Fin and Lap and swart Malay,

To each his bosom-secret say. (lines 206–211)

In Yoder's analysis of the poem, these lines constitute a call 'to return, not of course to the courtly languages of Europe, but to the Pentecostal and universal tongue…which is the language of nature' (122). Although Yoder calls this a return, we have seen in *Nature* that the past and future are for Emerson one and the same, a fact that Eric J. Sundquist identifies as a specifically American quality, a result of the fact that, for the nineteenth century citizen of the expanding United States, 'going *back* and going *forth*, are the same: the primitive is Past, but it is also West, and West is Future' (45). This uniquely American conflation of time and space, of escaping (and simultaneously embracing) the past through geographical movement, is at the heart of Emerson's second "Woodnotes" poem, and lends new significance to the Westward movement noted by the pine above, and its description: 'It leaves the land behind like ages past.' Emerson embraces and utilises the prospective nature of the American landscape of the nineteenth century not only in order to nullify the past, but to secure future American ascendancy of both culture and spirit. That this ascendancy has literary implications is made explicit in the leading

essay of Emerson's *Essays Second Series*, published three years after "Woodnotes II." In this essay, Emerson writes:

> Our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boats and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres. (*CW* 3:22)

Emerson's "Woodnotes" poems combine antagonistic personal engagement with attention to ideas of nation and the cultivation of a national identity. As in *Nature*, the two elements exist simultaneously and alongside one another, neither taking precedence over the other.

Emerson's *Representative Men* and Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*

3

In their explorations of Thomas Carlyle's influence on Emerson's works, Patrick Keane, David Greenham, and Richard Gravil focus predominately on the Scottish writer's significance as a transmitter of German idealism. For Keane, Carlyle is of significance to Emerson for his 'entanglements with' and 'filter[ing]' of German idealism, presented most overtly in Carlyle's early work, *Sartor Resartus* (Keane 83, 37). In *Emerson's Transatlantic Romanticism*, Greenham also centres his exploration of Carlyle's significance to Emerson on the influence wielded by *Sartor Resartus*. Specifically, Greenham considers traces of the text's influence in Emerson's essay, *Nature*, particularly in regard to Emerson's 'epistemology of form' – *Sartor Resartus* became a model for Emerson's 'way of answering philosophical questions using the flexibility of metaphorical expression' (45). Gravil, too, notes the influence of Carlyle's early text on Emerson's inaugural essay, summarising that influence through a reading of the essay's "Introduction":

> [In *Nature*,] Emerson fuses three of *Sartor*'s themes in his own introduction: the adjuration to escape from the bondage of old clothes; the theme of supernatural bases of the natural, which emerges in later chapters as a

major thesis; and a Fichtean definition of nature as encompassing "all which philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME."' (*Romantic Dialogues* 94)

The shared focus of these three transatlantic scholars on *Sartor Resartus*' influence illustrates what is indeed one of Emerson's most significant inheritances from Carlyle – his transcendental thought. More specifically, this scholarship demonstrates the significance of Carlyle's early text specifically to the American writer.

Emerson's affinity for Carlyle's philosophical novel is immediate. Upon his first encounter with the text in 1834, Emerson is enthusiastic enough about the work to write a letter to the Scottish writer relaying his praise. Emerson explains that his admiration for *Sartor Resartus* derives from its ability, and the ability of its author, to '[dispense] that which is rarest, namely, the simplest truths, truths which lie next to consciousness,' truths that, according to Emerson, 'only the Platos and Goethes perceive' (*Correspondence* 99).[23] In light of Emerson's admiration for the intellect and the expressive talents of both Goethe and Plato, this is the highest of compliments. Emerson concludes his praise by thanking Carlyle for the 'brave stand [he] made for Spiritualism in these writings' (*Correspondence* 98).

Significant in itself for the high praise of *Sartor Resartus* it contains, Emerson's letter is also important for in its inauguration of a correspondence between the two writers that would last for nearly four decades between 1834 and 1872. That Emerson felt compelled to re-establish a connection with the writer less than a year after their first meeting at Craiggenputtock, and that he does so on the

[23] Emerson would go on to become Carlyle's American literary agent of sorts, organising the publication of an American edition of *Sartor Resartus*.

basis of his affinity for Carlyle's transcendental thought, reveals the significance of Carlyle's novel, specifically in the period during which Emerson was in the process of composing *Nature*. However, while *Sartor Resartus* certainly had a significant influence on Emerson's early essay, as traced by the work of the aforementioned scholars among others, and while Keane has shown that traces of its influence can also be found in Emerson's Divinity School Address and in the poem "Threnody," Emerson does not engage directly and antagonistically in these works with *Sartor Resartus* specifically. When Emerson does engage antagonistically and directly with one work of Carlyle's, that text is *On Heroes*. In this engagement in *Representative Men*, Emerson interacts not with Carlyle's ideal conception of the world but with Carlyle's account of history – its definition, its movement, its function, and most significantly, the individual's ideal manner of interacting with it.

One might wonder, then, if *Sartor Resartus* had such a significant impact on the American writer during the period in which he was composing a seminal essay and one founded on the very transcendental thought that is found in the Scottish writer's text, why *Nature* demonstrates an antagonistic engagement with *Aids to Reflection* rather than *Sartor Resartus*. In other words, why was Carlyle's novel apparently a less potent source of anxiety for Emerson than Coleridge's text at the time and indeed throughout his literary career? One answer to this question can be found by returning to Emerson's inaugural letter which, in addition to its effusive praise, also contains revelatory criticism of Carlyle's text.

Aimed predominately at what Emerson calls 'the oddity of the vehicle' chosen to convey the 'treasure' of Carlyle's message in *Sartor Resartus*, Emerson's criticism of the text is formal, and he suggests to Carlyle that '[a]t least in some of

your prefaces you should give us the theory of your rhetoric' (*Correspondence* 99). 'I comprehend not why you should lavish in that spendthrift style of yours celestial truths,' he continues, 'Bacon and Plato have something too solid to say than that they can afford to be humorists' (Ibid). That Emerson identified a certain oddity in the vehicle of the Carlyle's otherwise congenial message significantly impacts the potency of *Sartor Resartus* as a source of influence and as a source of anxiety, particularly in regard to Emerson's task in *Nature* specifically. As we have seen previously, Emerson intended his inaugural essay to be an exposition of his first philosophy, a treatise regarding his understanding of the relationship between man, nature, and God. As a source of guidance and as a source from which he could also detach or turn away, Emerson turned to Coleridge, whom he understood to be the premier philosophical writer of his day, and to *Aids to Reflection*, a paradigmatic philosophical text.

Most significantly, however, while *Sartor* incorporates discussions of history and although its central 'biographical' narrative conveys Carlyle's understanding of history in several ways, it is a work of fiction and not a historiography. Carlyle's most anxiety-inducing influence for Emerson issues not from the transcendental elements of his thought but from his ideas regarding a subject to which the Scottish writer arguably paid far more attention throughout his career; Emerson's most anxiety-inducing inheritance or assimilation from Carlyle is his understanding of history.

German idealism was transmitted to Emerson through several sources of which Carlyle is only one and not the most significant. Emerson's thoughts on biographical history, however, a subject for which he showed a literary interest as

early as his biographical lectures of 1835, and a topic of conversation in many of his letters with Carlyle, is dominated in two manners by Carlyle's influence.

Firstly, Carlyle was a premier historical thinker of his day. The Scottish writer published numerous works on the subject of history, from his early conceptual explorations of the subject in essays like "On History" (1830) and "On History Again" (1833), to his later historiographical works of which *On Heroes* is one of many, including the aforementioned *French Revolution* which Emerson in 1838. This is to say that Emerson gravitated toward Carlyle's historical works and would have felt the anxiety that comes with being pulled into the orbit of another thinker, regardless of his eventual friendship with the Scottish writer. This friendship, however, is the second and perhaps most significant factor in the anxiety-inducing influence of Carlyle's biographical understanding of history. In the following pages, I will trace in detail the nature of the writers' correspondence in the years prior to the publication of *Representative Men* to demonstrate that, in addition to Carlyle's published writing on historical subjects, the anxiety-inducing nature of the Scottish writer's influence is exacerbated by his actual efforts to influence Emerson and his writing, to make Emerson a man of concrete subjects rather than a writer of abstraction. In confronting Carlyle in the pages of *Representative Men*, Emerson confronts not only the anxiety-inducing nature of his intellectual proximity regarding ideas of biographical history, but also Carlyle's literal proximity or presence.

‘I long to see some concrete thing’: Emerson, Carlyle, and their Correspondence

To begin this discussion of Carlyle’s and Emerson’s correspondence, I would like to return briefly to their opening exchange of 1833 and more specifically to Carlyle’s response to Emerson’s criticism of *Sartor Resartus* expressed in the American’s writer’s inaugural letter. Although Carlyle does not acknowledge the content of what he deems Emerson’s ‘saucy’ objections to formal, rhetorical, and stylistic elements of the novel, the Scottish writer responds with a similarly disparaging account of his own work:

> In any case, God be thanked, I am done with it; can wash my hands of it, and send it forth; sure that the Devil will get his full share of it, and not a whit more, clutch as he may. But as for you, my Transoceanic Brothers, read this earnestly, for it *was* earnestly meant and written, and contains no *voluntary* falsehood of mine. (*Correspondence* 103; original emphasis)

Carlyle’s willingness to wash his hands of *Sartor Resartus* can be at least partially explained by the fact that, despite its recent publication at the time of Emerson’s letter, Carlyle had in fact composed *Sartor Resartus* some years earlier; the Scottish writer had long since moved on (Harris 48).[24] Carlyle admits as much to his American correspondent, writing of the work, ‘…I wrote it four years ago, and could not now so write it, and on the whole… “will do better another time”’ (*Correspondence* 103). Carlyle’s final comment also locates *Sartor Resartus* in a

[24] After significant struggles composing the text, Carlyle then encountered difficulties in publishing itand it remained in manuscript form from June 1831 until October 1833 when it was finally published serially in *Fraser’s Magazine*. Robert Tarr discusses at length Carlyle’s struggle in both composing and publishing *Sartor Resartus* (xlii–lxxv).

broader exploration, one defined by Carlyle's exploration of the ideal mode of literary expression and of what it means to be a writer. Elsewhere in his letter he will more specifically locate the work and all contemporary works of literature in a more general nadir, declaring his belief that humanity has exhausted all literary platforms presently available:

> For you are to know, my view is that now at last we have lived to see all manner of Poetics and Rhetorics and Sermonics, and one may say generally all manner of *Pulpits* for addressing mankind from, as good as broken and abolished: alas, yes! if you have any earnest meaning which demands to be not only listened to, but *believed* and *done,* you cannot (at least I cannot) utter it *there,* but the sound sticks in my throat, as when a solemnity were *felt* to have become a mummery; and so one leaves the pasteboard coulisses, and three unities, and Blair's Lectures, quite behind; and feels only that there is *nothing sacred,* then, but the *Speech of Man* to believing Men! (*Correspondence* 103–104; original emphasis)

Carlyle's revelation is significant because it situates his later historiographical works in an self-described atmosphere of literary experimentation. It is also significant simply for what it reveals about Carlyle's thoughts regarding the state of literature and of writing. These sentiments undoubtedly influenced Carlyle's interactions with Emerson and, more specifically, inspired his calls for the American writer to embrace a new style alongside new subjects.

Carlyle's 1834 letter is also significant for its revelation of the new subject to which he has personally turned in attempting to renovate the broken modes of expression available to modern writers:

> Finally, I am busy, constantly studying with my whole might for a Book on the *French Revolution*. It is part of my creed that the Only Poetry is History, could we tell it right. This truth (if it prove one) I have not yet got to the limitations of; and shall in no way except by *trying* it in practice. (*Correspondence* 105)

Readers should understand Carlyle's new choice of subject in relation to the Scottish writer's more hopeful suggestion in his letter to Emerson that, despite the current expressive trough in which humanity finds itself, day will come when the mind will 'anew environ itself with fit modes' (*Correspondence* 104). Carlyle explicitly situates his new historiographical works in this atmosphere of hope and experimentation, revealing that since completing *Sartor Resartus*, he has 'been trying, am still trying, other methods, and shall surely get nearer the truth, as I honestly strive for it' (*Correspondence* 104). That is to say, while his account of literature first appears pessimistic, Carlyle believes that a new literary form, one correspondent to the sacred nature of that which is spoken, will eventually be discovered. More specifically, Carlyle believes that the secret to this new form of expression is history. This is not to suggest that Carlyle promotes looking to history for models of writing. Rather, he promotes the expression of history itself; Carlyle's historiographical writing is in fact decidedly novel insofar as it embraces new Victorian techniques.[25]

In this first letter, the opposition between *Sartor Resartus* and Carlyle's new historical works, *The French Revolution* and *The Diamond Necklace*, presages an

[25] For more information on Carlyle's embrace of new Victorian historiographical techniques, and of the development of these new approaches more generally, see Juliette Atkinson's *Victorian Biography Reconsidered* (2010).

opposition found throughout Emerson's and Carlyle's correspondence. Letters reveal that Carlyle considers many of Emerson's works to be representative of an expressive mode and an attention to subjects that the Scottish writer had long since left behind following the composition and publication of *Sartor Resartus*, and which he associates with the outdated and insufficient modes of the past. As we have seen from his first letter to Emerson, the literary future as Carlyle understands it is historiography, and in expressing his opinions of almost all of Emerson's major works prior to the publication of *Representative Men* – *Nature*, the American Scholar Address, the Divinity School Address, and *Essays First Series* – Carlyle encourages Emerson in this new direction. It is against this influence, in addition to the congeniality of thought represented by Carlyle's biographical conception of history, that Emerson positions *Representative Men*, finally responding to Carlyle's criticism of nearly two decades that is traced below.

Upon the publication of Emerson's first major work, *Nature*, in 1836, what Carlyle understands to be the abstract quality of Emerson's inaugural essay informs the Scottish writer's tepid response to the text. Carlyle's comments are admittedly positive and complimentary of Emerson's talents, and he describes the American writer as having 'an ear for the *Ewigen Melodien*, which pipe in the winds round us,' a comment that coincidentally echoes language Emerson uses in his 1834 letter to describe Carlyle's talents (*Correspondence* 147).[26] However, Carlyle dedicates only a single sentence to Emerson's essay in one letter, and he introduces his comments

[26] In his 1834 letter, Emerson writes 'Believe then that harp and ear are formed by one revolution of the wheel; that men are waiting to hear your epical song; and so be pleased to skip those excursive involved glees, and give us the simple air, without the volley of variations' (*Correspondence* 99).

without fanfare between discussion of new editions of *Sartor Resartus* and complaints regarding his latest troubles with 'the unutterable *French Revolution!*' (*Correspondence* 158). While Carlyle is impressed by Emerson's talent, he has little constructive commentary to offer regarding the content of the essay, presumably because he disapproves of it or has little to say regarding its abstract subject matter.

One year later, Carlyle is significantly more enthusiastic in his reaction to Emerson's American Scholar Address, and he dedicates a large portion of a letter to expounding his compliments:

> …out of the West comes a clear utterance, clearly recognizable as a *man's* voice, and I *have* a kinsman and brother: God be thanked for it! I could have *wept* to read that speech; the clear high melody of it went tingling through my heart… My brave Emerson! And all this has been lying silent, quite tranquil in him, these seven years, and the "vociferous platitude" dinning his ears on all sides, and he quietly answering no word; and a whole world of Thought has silently built itself in these calm depths, and, the day being come, says quite softly, as if it were a common thing, "Yes, I *am* here too." (*Correspondence* 173; original emphasis)

In the American Scholar Address, Emerson is emphatic and most importantly he is a social critic; to this Carlyle responds enthusiastically. For Carlyle, *Nature* is the necessary but ultimately unfinished 'Foundation and Ground-plan' of Emerson's work, while the American Scholar Address is true and high melody, a representation of the heights to which Emerson can ascend if he only builds on that foundation (*Correspondence* 147). Emerson's American Scholar Address considers man and

society, and man *in* society, 'Man Thinking,' not to be confused with 'the mere thinker' (*CW* 1:53). Emerson's exploration of Man Thinking is a call to action; he calls upon America, the 'sluggard continent,' to aspire to new intellectual heights, to actively live up to this potential. And although Emerson points his finger at America specifically in the Address, his critique extends to all those 'men in the world of to-day' who are 'bugs, are spawn, and are called "the mass" and "the herd"' (*CW* 1:65). In Carlyle's eyes, however, Emerson does not again ascend to these heights in the early years of his career, and Carlyle's subsequent letters to the American writer record numerous attempts to push him back toward more substantial, pertinent subjects like those discussed in the American Scholar Address.

Perhaps the most notable of Carlyle's attempts to sway Emerson is his response to Emerson's 1838 Divinity School Address. In a letter, Carlyle explicitly defines his exception to the text in terms of Emerson's tendency toward abstraction, that is to say, Emerson's tendency to resort to descriptions of things rather than presenting readers with true revelation. As a corrective, Carlyle suggests that Emerson adopt more 'concrete' topics and offers history as a specific alternative to Emerson's universal abstractions:

> You *tell* us with piercing emphasis, that a man's soul is great; *shew* us a great soul of a man…I long to see some concrete Thing, some Event, Man's Life, American Forest, or piece of Creation, which this Emerson loves and wonders at, well *Emersonized*, depictured by Emerson, filled with the life of Emerson, and cast forth from him then to live by itself. (*Correspondence* 215; original emphasis)

In both Kenneth Marc Harris's and Robert Weisbuch's interpretations, Carlyle's critique of the Divinity School Address constitutes a challenge to the American writer (*Atlantic Double-Cross* 179; *Emerson and Carlyle* 48). In this vein, we might consider "History," an essay Emersonpublished in 1841, at least in part as an acceptance of this challenge. In this text, Emerson defines history in explicitly Carlylean terms, stating that there is 'properly no history; only biography' (*CW* 2:6). However, in this essay, while Emerson explores and 'debunk[s]' traditional approaches to historical scholarship, he does not in fact approach history practically as he does in *Representative Men* (*Atlantic Double-Cross* 179). That is to say, he does not take events or the lives of men as his subjects, but instead, like Carlyle in "On History" and "On History Again," considers history conceptually. Thus, while "History" might be considered a partial acceptance of Carlyle's challenge to Emersonize more concrete topics, it is not until the publication of *Representative Men* that Emerson truly accepts Carlyle's challenge and, in doing so, responds to Carlyle's repeated critiques.

Prior to the publication of *Representative Men*, however, Carlyle's criticism continues, and in 1841 appears to escalate when it finds its way from the pages of Emerson's and Carlyle's private correspondence into the public sphere. In his preface to the British edition of Emerson's *Essays First Series* (1841), Carlyle is not overtly critical of the text that he introduces. In fact, ostensibly, his remarks are complimentary of Emerson. Carlyle states that the strength of Emerson's *Essays* lies in the fact that the text provides 'a direct glimpse into the man and that spiritual world of his' and is 'the soliloquy of one true soul, alone under the stars' (x, xi). Such gifts of spiritual insight appear positive, but Carlyle emphasises that Emerson's

insights are his alone, relating only to his own soul, under the stars. In the preface Carlyle is also conspicuously inattentive to the philosophical value of Emerson's essays, an omission that seems to be quite telling, particularly in light of Carlyle's concluding remarks:

> What Emerson's talent is, we will not altogether estimate by this Book. The utterance is abrupt, fitful; the great idea not yet embodied struggles towards an embodiment. Yet everywhere there is the true heart of a man; which is the parent of all talent… (xii).

In short, Carlyle applauds Emerson's potential, but is clear that he considers these essays to be a poor example and use of Emerson's talents.

In 1845, Emerson reveals in a letter the first hints of the lecture series that would eventually be published in 1850 as *Representative Men*. In a letter in which the opening subject is the publication of Carlyle's *Miscellanies* in America, Emerson concludes with an almost offhand mention of what, after over a decade of Carlyle's insistence, ostensibly constitutes an acquiescence to the Scottish writer. Emerson's words, as we have seen previously in regard to *The Excursion*, are almost performative in their indifference. In this instance, however, Emerson's affectation of insignificance is directed at his own work. In a paragraph that begins with talk of his garden 'shamefully overgrown with weeds,' and includes a brief mention of Emerson's attempts at poetry ('Fear not, dear friend, you shall not have to read one line'), he concludes with the following statements:

> Meantime, I think to set a few heads before me, as good texts for winter evening entertainments. I wrote a deal about Napoleon a few months ago, after reading a library of memoirs. Now I have Plato, Montaigne, and

> Swedenborg, and more in the clouds behind. What news of Naseby and Worcester? (*Correspondence* 379)

From his self-deprecating account of these essays as good only for 'winter evening entertainments' to his abrupt transition to new topics with the letter's concluding query, it appears that Emerson does all he can to trivialise his latest project. Although Emerson directs this minimising language at his own work, the true target of Emerson's indifference is, albeit indirectly, the influence wielded by a British writer of temporal and intellectual proximity. In diminishing these biographical studies of historical great men Emerson also minimises the significance of his turn toward these subjects as an acquiescence to years of Carlyle's exhortations.

Carlyle's response to Emerson's revelation is, as expected, is enthusiastic: 'Very glad shall I be, my Friend, to have some new utterances from you either in verse or in prose!' he writes (*Correspondence* 380). As is typical, however, the Scottish writer accompanies enthusiasm with counsel, offering a suggestion to supplement Emerson's list of historical figures:

> I wish you would take an American Hero, one whom you really love; and give us a History of him,—make an artistic bronze statue (in good words) of his Life and him! I do indeed.—But speak of what you will, you are welcome to me. Once more I say, No other voice in this wide waste world seems to my sad ear to be speaking at all at present. The more is the pity for us. (*Correspondence* 381)

Although Emerson would indeed add further historical figures to his biographical lecture series, they would not be American. Rather, the two figures Emerson will add to *Representative Men* are Shakespeare and Napoleon, both of whom appear

in *On Heroes* as well, and in his portrayal of the latter, as we will see, Emerson incorporates a critique of Carlyle's whole system of history.

As noted in the introductory discussion to this thesis, while Carlyle records his appreciation for the 'portraitures full of likeness' found in *Representative Men*, in a letter to Emerson he also conveys his disagreement with certain aspects of the text, namely the 'end of all these Essays' (*Correspondence* 460). Emerson never responds to the criticism recorded in Carlyle's 1850 letter, nor does he respond to another correspondence from Carlyle sent a month later. In fact, Carlyle's letter regarding *Representative Men* marks a period of over a year in which the two writers do not correspond, not resuming communication again until 28 July, 1851. This period of silence is followed by a general decline in their written communication throughout the 1850s and 1860s.[27]

The concurrence of a decline in the writers' correspondence and the publication of *Representative Men* is perhaps only coincidental. However, the following exploration of Emerson's text alongside *On Heroes* suggests that by 1850 Emerson and Carlyle have reached an unnavigable ideological impasse. While the American writer assimilates Carlyle's biographical understanding of history as a foundation to this own account of history and of the individual's relationship to it, he departs in *Representative Men* from Carlyle's thought on several grounds. The fundamental ground of all of Emerson's detachments, however, is his refusal to

[27] Highlighting this decline is a comparison of the number of letters exchanged before and after the publication of *Representative Men*. Over the course of the 1830s and 1840s, the first two decades of their correspondence, Emerson and Carlyle exchanged 141 letters. In the following decade between 1850 and 1860, the pair exchanged only 47.

conform to Carlyle's understanding of hero-worship, a facet of the Scottish writer's understanding of history that permeates all other areas of his philosophy of history.

Economy, Individualism, and History in *Representative Men* and *On Heroes*

The following discussion centres on the connection Carlyle draws in *On Heroes* between changes in society's morals, religion, and politics – that is, society's descent into chaos – and its steady progress toward what he views as extreme individualism. Carlyle in turn links this individualism to the rise of the market economy under which production and consumption have become 'empty procedures in which people become aware only of objects and lose sight of any social unity' (Garofalo 295). Carlyle seizes upon the emergent vocabulary of the market to enact a critique of this change and to assert the modern hero-king as an ameliorative alternative. As such, Carlyle's emphasis on the political hero is, as we will see, an attempt not only to reassume the divine, transcendent authority lost in society's decline, but also to return order and unity to what he views as modern chaos and the disunity of individualism through organising hero-worship.

In *Representative Men*, Emerson, like Carlyle, notes the selfishness of the modern era and similarly links society's self-interest to its growing dependence on the market economy. However, while Carlyle asserts that the answer to consuming self-interest is the reorganisation of society into organic hierarchical structures, Emerson suggests that individuals need more independence. The individual must learn that great men do not exist to be worshipped, but rather to be surpassed by

greater men and greater achievements. Thus, in *Representative Men*, consumption, an act to which the text repeatedly refers, is a positive one that describes the individual's ideal interaction with the genius of humanity of which history is comprised. Emerson's revision and subversion of Carlyle's economic vocabulary and its relationship to hero-worship constitutes both his detachment from Carlyle's conception of history and from *On Heroes*, and the American writer's original creation.

Production and Consumption in On Heroes

In his assessment of Carlyle's historiographical works, Chris Vanden Bossche describes how each of they

> …represent an attempt to resolve dilemmas raised by what [Carlyle] and his contemporaries perceived as a revolutionary shift of authority in virtually all realms of discourse and institutions of power in Western Europe. From his vantage point, it appeared not only that authority had shifted, but that the transcendental grounds for it had been undermined. (1)

The shift in authority to which Vanden Bossche refers in this instance is the transition away from hierarchical power structures such as those that marked medieval feudalism, and their subsequent replacement with 'democratic and individualistic institutions' (Ibid). For Carlyle, hierarchical society is marked by order and productivity in which the individual enjoys a 'mystified attachment' to the leader (Garofalo 295). Modern society, on the other hand, is the picture of self-interest in which disorder reigns and community is dissolved. For this loss of

community and the promulgation of destructive self-interest Carlyle blames liberal capitalism which has left society without hierarchical power structures and a centralised authority to '[energize] social relations' (Garofalo 295).

In addition to the collapse of traditional hierarchical power structures and loss of community, Carlyle associates capitalism and attendant self-interest with moral decline. In turn, he suggests, moral decline leads to chaos. In *On Heroes*, Carlyle presents the eighteenth century as the period in which this decline became most apparent. Discussing this period in "The Hero as a Man of Letters," Carlyle uses the term chaos more frequently than in any other chapter, emphasising this century as the seat of modern problems.[28]

Throughout Carlyle's oeuvre, violence is presented as a manifestation of such social chaos and a reflection of society's lack of necessary power structures. In *Past and Present*, Carlyle describes how the modern English population, 'isolated, unrelated, girt in with a cold universal Laissez Faire,' descends into violence (181). This violence is dictated by self-interest and lack of community like that which characterises the 'Manchester Insurrection' discussed in Book I of the text, or the disturbances caused by Chartism to which Carlyle's text also refers. Similar references can be found in *On Heroes*, particularly in relation to the violence of the French Revolution and to the English Civil Wars. Another earlier exploration of the violent intersection between what Carlyle perceives as modern political, moral, and economic decline is found in *The French Revolution* (1837).

[28] Interestingly, equally pervasive in this chapter are references to the chaos of writing, or what Carlyle refers to as the 'chaos of Authorship' and the 'wild welter of a chaos which is called Literary Life' (*OH* 158). It seems that there is an interesting connection to be made between Carlyle's distrust of individualism and his feelings regarding his own profession.

In *The French Revolution* Carlyle accepts the necessity of France's revolution insofar as it allowed for a transition from false to true in terms of moral authority. Such sanctioning of revolution as a method of moral and political cleansing is found in Carlyle's work as early as *Sartor Resartus* in Teufelsdrockh's understanding that 'old sick Society should be deliberately burnt…in the faith that she is a Phoenix' (*SR* 175). From the ashes of society, says Teufelsdrockh, a 'new heaven-born young one' will arise (Ibid). Although Teufelsdrockh makes no explicit reference to violence in this instance the notion of revolution, of the destruction of the very fabric and foundation of society, is implied. Unfortunately, according to Carlyle in *The French Revolution*, out of the ashes of France's sick society, nothing new or heaven-born emerged. Instead, following the revolution, France was ruled by what Carlyle calls 'the law of Hunger,' a hunger 'for all sweet things,' knowing only that 'Pleasure is pleasant' (*French Revolution* 39).

Democratised and thus without a true authority either moral or political, the hunger into which the French population descends following the revolution is an abandonment to selfish desires and self-interest. References to cannibalism or self-devouring predominate in *The French Revolution*, marking what Charles Vanden Bossche calls 'social autophagy,' or the idea that, without a ruler to cohere and to structure it, society will resort to self-destructive cannibalism (85). For Carlyle, the French Revolution is unequivocal evidence of this fact with the fraternitè swiftly turning against one another, brother sending brother to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror.[29]

[29] For a detailed analysis of the imagery of cannibalism in *The French Revolution*, see Charles Vanden Bossche pp.83–86.

Carlyle's references to hunger and (self-)devouring echo the language of the free marketplace, implicating economic as well as political change in France's descent into violent chaos. This language and its use in relation to political and social strife persists in *On Heroes* in descriptions of the French Revolution as a 'great devouring, self-devouring' event (*OH* 206), and in Carlyle's references to the inefficiencies of Parliamentary democracy prior to Cromwell's Protectorate:

> You sixty men there, becoming fast odious, even despicable, to the whole nation, whom the nation already calls Rump Parliament, you cannot continue to sit there: who or what then is to follow? "Free Parliament," right of Election, Constitutional Formulas of one sort or the other,—the thing is a hungry Fact coming on us, which we must answer or be devoured by it! (*OH* 198)

Carlyle's disdain for democratic institutions here is clear, and it is no surprise that both this quotation and Carlyle's aforementioned references to consumption are found alongside repeated references to chaos in the final chapter of *On Heroes*, that which is dedicated to 'The Hero as King'. Without the community-building that religious authority once wielded or the hierarchical structures of the feudal past, and with the new threats of individualising political and economic structures, Carlyle suggests that society requires a new kind of hero, a hero for the modern age, whose power and influence is political: the hero king. Carlyle examples this modern hero with two figures, Oliver Cromwell and Napoleon Bonaparte.

Carlyle's hero-king commands moral authority implicitly because, for Carlyle, 'there is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience' and because faith is 'loyalty to some inspired teacher, some inspired hero' (*OH* 171;

12). But Carlyle also aligns the motivation of his hero-kings with their desire to reinstate religious structures, or to protect these structures against attacks. Cromwell's actions, for example, are said to have been prompted by the desire to return England to a Christian path amidst the 'sufferings of God's Church,' and Napoleon is described as having been 'fighting for God and religion in an age when God was no longer believed' (*OH* 218; 230). Furthermore, these motivations are not the hero-kings' own, but rather the product of a divine decree; these heroic figures are instruments of God's will (Wellek 67).

Napoleon and Cromwell serve a stabilising function in the chaos of modern society, wielding their power for good by re-establishing the hierarchy or, to use Carlyle's term, '*Hero*archy' (*OH* 12; original emphasis). However, this heroarchy has been replaced in the modern era by 'Democracy, Liberty, Equality, and I know not what: - the notes being all false' (Ibid). The hero-kings' stabilising effect on society derivess from their ability to organise the chaos into which it has descended and to transmit this change 'downward through the hierarchy,' transforming society 'from above rather than from below' (Vanden Bossche 110).

The French Revolution, for example, although it effects change, does so from below; it is a revolution of the masses, and as a result descends into chaos that requires organisation and stabilisation through the reimplementation of a hierarchical social structure. This reimplementation requires the moral and political authority of a single heroic figure, and Carlyle's description of Napoleon in *On Heroes* stresses not only the chaos into which French society descended following the revolution, but emphasises the organisational powers of Napoleon as hero-king:

> Through his brilliant Italian Campaigns, onwards to the Peace of Leoben, one would say, his inspiration is: "Triumph to the French Revolution; assertion of it against these Austrian Simulacra that pretend to call it a Simulacrum!" Withal, however, he feels, and has a right to feel, how necessary a strong Authority is; how the Revolution cannot prosper or last without such. To bridle in that great devouring, self-devouring French Revolution; to *tame* it, so that its intrinsic purpose can be made good, that it may become *organic*, and be able to live among other organisms and *formed* things, not as a wasting destruction alone: is not this still what he partly aimed at, as the true purport of his life; nay what he actually managed to do? (*OH* 206; original emphasis)

According to Carlyle, Napoleon's heroism issues from his ability to organise devouring self-interest into something organic and productive. The notion of a hero's ability to produce organic stability from societal chaos recurs throughout Carlyle's historical writing. In *Past and Present*, he similarly describes the efforts of Abbot Samson to organise twelfth century monastic life as an incessant struggle to 'educe organic method out of lazily fermenting wreck' (*Past and Present* 78). Elsewhere he refers to Samson's 'clear-beaming eyesight' that 'like the *Fiat Lux* in that inorganic waste whirlpool, penetrates gradually into all nooks, and of the chaos makes a *kosmos* or ordered world' (*Past and Present* 79; original emphasis).

The spiritual and moral power wielded by Abbot Samson, Napoleon, and Cromwell, differs in practice but not in kind from other heroic figures detailed in *On Heroes*. Carlyle's heroes attempt through actions, speech, or text, to spread their spiritual message, but the hero-king is distinguished in the text by the active nature

of his powers compared to the passive power wielded by other heroes. This distinction is particularly apparent in Carlyle's comparison of John Knox, an example of the hero as prophet, and Cromwell in the final chapter of *On Heroes*:

> The Theocracy which John Knox in his pulpit might dream of as a "devout imagination," this practical man [Cromwell], experiences in the whole chaos of most rough practice, dared to consider as capable of being *realized*. (*OH* 194)

While Knox is able only to imagine society created anew, Cromwell dreams of realising a new social order and eventually accomplishes this task, despite the manner in which he is presently regarded.[30]

In precis, in contrast to the consuming or devouring chaos of the modern world, Carlyle's hero-king, with his moral and political authority, produces from chaos an ordered, organised society. He is a figure who creates productive, organic society in organising it and returning man to the structure and community of a hierarchical system, thus rescuing him from blind self-interest. Carlyle suggests that the emergence of a modern hero-king is inevitable; history consistently tends toward and seeks order because man himself instinctively and inherently seeks the order and heroarchy of authority:

> Thus too all human things, maddest French Sanculottisms, do and must work towards Order. I say, there is not a *man* in them, raging in the thickest of the madness, but it is impelled withal, at all moments, toward Order. His

[30] Carlyle links the disparagement of Cromwell in the nineteenth century to the failures of the eighteenth. The moral failures of this century seem also to have had an effect on their ability to detect heroic qualities: 'This view of Cromwell seems to me the not unnatural product of a century like the Eighteenth. As we said of the Valet, so of the Sceptic: He does not know a Hero when he sees him!' (*OH* 179).

very life means that; Disorder is dissolution, death. No chaos but it seeks a *centre* to revolve round. While man is man, some Cromwell or Napoleon is the necessary finish of a Sansculottism. (*OH* 175–176; original emphasis)

Society and history inherently move toward order and structure, seeking out cohesion whether through spiritual means, as with the hero-prophets, or through political means, as with the hero-kings. In all instances, however, Carlyle understands man not only as necessitating hierarchical order, but desiring it, searching out a centre – a great man – around which to revolve.

Production and Consumption in Representative Men

In *On Heroes*, Carlyle uses the language of the marketplace to critique capitalism's individualising and thus destabilising qualities. The self-consuming nature of society's newfound individualism requires an organising ameliorative, an authoritative great man who can arrange from society's chaos something productive. In *Representative Men*, however, Emerson will use the language of the marketplace to create an entirely new economy, an economy of history.

The true motivation behind *Representative Men* is not the delineation of the qualities that make Emerson's great men representative, or indeed what defines any man as representative. Rather, Emerson's text is predominately an exploration of the value of great men in the broader economy of history it delineates, and for thie sreason, my discussion focuses on this economy.

For Carlyle, the value of great men lies in what they do – in the tangible social changes they effect in their organising, productive function. For Emerson,

however, the value of representative men is not in what they do, but in what one does with them. It is only through the individual's interactions with great men, interactions that Emerson outlines in detail in the text's opening chapter, "Uses of Great Men," that man's intellectual history moves outward in concentric circles, progressing.

"Uses of Great Men" and Emerson's Economy of History

"Uses of Great Men" begins by establishing the fundamentals of Emerson's economy of history, defining great men in terms of the goods and services they provide. Emerson establishes two 'kinds of service we derive from others,' one primary and the other secondary (*CW* 4:4). The secondary service that great men offer is 'direct': the 'giving of material or metaphysical aid' (*CW* 4:5). Direct giving, however, is 'contrary to the law of the universe' because it is 'mechanical' and thus in contrast to the 'discoveries of nature in us' (*CW* 4:6). The primary and most significant service that a representative man provides, then, is the ability to discover one's self. Emerson defines this in "Uses of Great Men" as an 'indirect service' and one that 'serve[s] us in the intellect' (*CW* 4:6).

Elsewhere in the text's opening essay, Emerson defines this quality as being 'representative' of ideas, illuminating one of the meanings behind his title (*CW* 4:6). Emerson most explicitly expresses the relationship between great men and the goods and services they offer when he asks hypothetically, 'How to illustrate the benefit of ideas, the service rendered by those who introduce moral truths to the mind?' (*CW* 4:12). The basic framework of Emerson's economy of history is one in

which intellectual history's value derives from its revelation of moral truths and in which great men play a representative rather than active or generative role. In distinction to the economy in which Americans of the nineteenth century increasingly participate, Emerson's economy of intellectual history is a 'mental and moral force,' always a 'positive good': 'It goes out from you whether you will or not, and *profit* me whom you never thought of…' (*CW* 4:8; emphasis added). 'This,' writes Emerson, 'is the moral of biography' (*CW* 4:9).

The 'profit' that one receives from history is both intellectual and spiritual progress, the facilitation of movement outward in concentric circles of thought. In Emerson's economy of history, this profit is paradoxically achieved through consumption: '…we feed on genius and refresh ourselves from too much conversation with our mates, and exult in the depth of nature in that direction in which he leads us' (*CW* 4:15). Later, developing his consumptive metaphor Emerson writes:

> The mind is a finer body, and resumes its functions of feeding, digesting, absorbing, excluding, and generating, in a new and ethereal element. Here, in the brain, is all the process of alimentation repeated, in the acquiring, comparing, digesting, and assimilating of experience. (*CW* 4:61)

Emerson incorporates these organic or biological metaphors of consumption into his economy of intellectual history because they propose a generative model of engagement with history, rather than one of exchange. Subverting the production/consumption and profit/loss dialectic that governs the market economy, Emerson posits a relationship between the individual and history in which the individual consumes, offering nothing in exchange, and yet receives only

profit. The organic metaphors to which he turns better convey the complex process at the heart of Emerson's economy of history, that which he outlines in "Uses of Great Men" after having established the basic framework of his system. To feed on or to consume genius is only the first step in a larger and more complex system of interactions that roughly follow the biological model of digestion, absorption, exclusion, and generation outlined in the quotation above.

In Emerson's economics of history, digestion corresponds to the first awakenings of the mind that the ideas of great men inspire. This first step in a larger process is defined in "Uses of Great Men" as the awakening of the imagination inspired by the ideas of great men:

> Foremost among these activities [of the mind], are the summersaults, spells, and resurrections, wrought by the imagination. When this wakes, a man seems to multiply ten times or a thousand times his force. It opens the delicious sense of indeterminate size, and inspires an audacious mental habit. We are as elastic as the gas of gunpowder, and a sentence in a book, or a word dropped in conversation, sets free our fancy, and instantly our heads are bathed with galaxies, and our feet tread the floor of the Pit. And this benefit is real, because we are entitled to these enlargements, and, once having passed the bounds, shall never again be quite the miserable pedants we were. (*CW* 4:10)

According to Emerson, however, 'Even these feasts have their surfeit,' and eventually 'Our delight in reason degenerates into idolatry of the herald' (*CW* 4:11). Emerson's allusion here to *On Heroes* and Carlyle's philosophy of history more

generally is not explicit, but it is evident that Emerson's account of idolatry responds to and departs from Carlyle's notion of hero-worship.

The idolatry Emerson describes in "Uses of Great Men" corresponds to a period of absorption, of having consumed an idea and been subsequently consumed by it. Emerson reassures readers, however, that it is a necessary phase in the individual's process of engagement with history. Absorption describes a stage in which the individual may become absorbed for a time with an idea, but it is also one in which the individual absorbs that idea, assimilating it into their own consciousness. 'Be the limb of their body, the breath of their mouth,' he writes, 'Compromise thy egotism' (*CW* 4:17). The embodiment that Emerson describes is only a temporary loss of self-reliance, an act of abandonment by which the individual also comes into possession of that which they have consumed. Emerson reassures readers that this act is naturally and organically followed by one of resistance or exclusion, 'For Nature wishes everything to remain itself' (*CW* 4:16).'The more we are drawn [to an idea], the more we are repelled,' he writes, 'the law of individuality collects its secret strength: you are you, and I am I, and so we remain' (Ibid).

Central to the law of individuality that Emerson describes in "Uses of Great Men" is an act of intellectual detachment echoing that noted in the accounts of creative reading previously explored. Describing detachment in the opening chapter of *Representative Men*, Emerson again turns to biological and scientific metaphor:

> In vain, the wheels of tendency will not stop, nor will all the forces of inertia, fear, or love itself, hold thee there. On, and forever onward! The microscope observes a monad or wheel-insect among the infusories circulating in water.

> Presently, a dot appears on the animal, which enlarges to a slit, and it becomes two perfect animals. The ever-proceeding detachment appears not less in all thought, and in society. Children think they cannot live without their parents. But, long before they are aware of it, the black dot has appeared, and the detachment taken place. Any accident will now reveal to them their independence. (*CW* 4:17)

Now independent from the idea with which they engaged, but also in possession of it via absorption, the individual is free to perform the final step in the economy of history outlined *Representative Men*: generation. Generation is the goal of Emerson's economy and the function of great men, as defined simply in the closing paragraph of "Uses of Great Men": '…great men exist that there may be greater men…' (*CW* 4:20). That is to say, great men exist to expand our thought and to push us into new regions or circumferences of the intellect; 'What they know, they know for us' (*CW* 4:12).

It is because great men exist that there may be greater men - because the fundamental principle of Emerson's economy of history is progress - that Emerson concludes each of his chapters in *Representative Men* with the destabilising volta on which Carlyle's aforementioned 1850 letter comments. In each chapter, after having spent the previous pages expounding their representative nature, Emerson concludes his accounts of historical figures with a refutation of their totalising genius. Plato's works for example are said not to possess the 'vital authority which the screams of the prophets and the sermons of unlettered Arabs and Jew possess,'

and Emerson notes critically that 'he has not a system' (*CW* 4:42, 43).[31] Swedenborg's books are said to 'have no melody, no emotion, no humor, no relief to the dead prosaic level,' and Shakespeare is described as having failed to 'explore the virtue which resides in these symbols [of nature]' (*CW* 4:81, 124). Beginning each chapter in awe of the representative man's genius only to turn away from it in conclusion, Emerson's prose reflects the notion of progress fundamental to his historical economy. There is no man 'in the procession of famous men,' says Emerson, who 'is reason or illumination, or that essence we are looking for' (*CW* 4:19). Individual consumers of history must not confuse a new region of thought as exposed by an idea for total illumination and rest there.

Helpful in conceptualising Emerson's economy of intellectual history in *Representative Men* is the economy of the poet identified by Thomas Birch in another of Emerson's seminal works, *Nature*. Birch's economy of the poet is one of four identified in Emerson's essay: in ascending order, the other three economies are those of the brute, the capitalist, and the philosopher. The brute economy is 'driven solely by animal instinct and physical laws,' while the capitalist economy is 'strictly material (M-M´)' (387). Although the capitalist, unlike the brute, employs his intellectual capacities, 'his goal is narrowly conceived: to alter the material world (M-M´) better to gratify his own or consumers' desires' (Ibid). The economy of the poet, which succeeds that of the capitalist, is one in which the individual, through transcendent, vatic visions converts the world around him or herself into a

[31] This latter critique is curious considering Emerson's own aversion to systematisation, recorded elsewhere in *Representative Men*: 'The more coherent and elaborate the system, the less I like it' (*CW* 4:76).

form of 'intellectual property that serves a public good' (390). Birch's definition of the poet continues:

> To be more specific, the poet discovers and expresses laws and correspondences that unite the human spirit with nature; as more and more people comprehend the poet's discovery, nature ceases to be a material object in the possession of an individual and comes to symbolize a creative spirit (i.e., the Oversoul) to which all human being belongs. Insofar as capitalism treats nature as a commodity, an economy emerges in which property and wealth are material, divisible, and privately owned. As one moves toward the economy of the poet, however, nature, wealth, and property coalesce into a common spiritual resource, indivisible and freely accessible to all. (Ibid)

While Birch's definition of the economy of the poet identifies nature alone as a common spiritual resource, in *Representative Men*, Emerson adds to this all of time and intellectual history. As such, Emerson's economy of history posits something nearer to what Birch identifies as the economy of the philosopher, a system in which '"wealth" derives wholly from intellectual production,' transcending the material and sensory world entirely and thus in a manner contradictory to the 'physiocratic doctrine that nature is the source of all wealth and the key to economic development' (388, 389).

In closing and in illustration of the transcendent, 'philosophical' nature of the economy of history outlined in *Representative Men*, I will turn one final time to "Uses of Great Men":

> How to illustrate the distinctive benefit of ideas, the service rendered by those who introduce moral truths into the general mind?— I am plagued, in all my living, with a perpetual tariff of prices. If I work in my garden, and prune an apple-tree, I am well enough entertained, and could continue indefinitely in the like occupation. [. . .] But if there should appear in the company some gentle soul who knows little of persons or parties, of Carolina or Cuba, but who announces a law that disposes these particulars, and so certifies me of the equity which checkmates every false player, bankrupts every self-seeker, and apprises me of my independence on any conditions of country, or time, or human body, that man liberates me; I forget the clock.
>
> I pass out of the sore relation to persons. I am healed of my hurts. I am made immortal by apprehending my possession of incorruptible goods. Here is great competition of rich and poor. We live in a market, where is only so much wheat, or wool, or land; and if I have so much more, every other must have so much less. I seem to have no good, without breach of good manners. (*CW* 4:13)

In implicit contrast to the pecuniary measurements of the marketplace, Emerson emphasises the intellectual nature of his economy of history. More than simply placing it in contrast to the marketplace, Emerson describes engagement with history as an economy in which time and space, the fundamental properties in which a material economy of any kind are rooted, are abolished, and in their place is the pure self of consciousness – the ME.

Emerson's Intellectual and National Detachment in *Representative Men*

When Emerson finally took it upon himself to consider the more concrete subject of history in *Representative Men*, after years of prompting from Carlyle, Emerson did so by engaging antagonistically with the text most representative of Carlyle's conception of history, *On Heroes*. In engaging antagonistically with *On Heroes*, Emerson confronted Carlyle's intellectual influence generally as well as the influence presented by the Scottish writer's more immediate personal presence. Adopting the structure of Carlyle's text and incorporating two of its historical figures into *Representative Men*, Emerson used this framework to establish his own model of history. *Representative Men* is indebted to *On Heroes* more than structurally, however, and Emerson also assimilated into his work a fundamental element of Carlyle's historical thought: the notion that history is biographical.

In exploring the two texts, it is evident that in engaging antagonistically with *On Heroes* and the ideas it contained, Emerson departed significantly from Carlyle's thought. As a result, Emerson's intellectual definition of biography in *Representative Men* as the 'genius of humanity' significantly revises Carlyle's physiognomical understanding of great men and their biographies. In addition, Emerson's detachment from Carlyle's historical thought results in an altered conception of history's movement. While Carlyle posits a cyclical and revolutionary account of history, Emerson embraces a progressive conception of historical movement moving outward in ever-widening circumferences of thought.

The distinctive nature of these elements in Emerson's system of history issue from a central intellectual detachment from Carlyle's thought on the grounds

of self-reliance. Carlyle imagines the function of great men to be organisational, providing necessary structure for society, and central to Carlyle's conception of social structure is the notion of heroarchy. What Carlyle views as the chaos of modern society evidenced by events like the French Revolution and the Chartist rebellion, is a both a product of and a symptom of a loss of hierarchical structures in society, politics, religion, and the economy. These structures, now replaced by an emphasis on the individual, once knitted society together, giving purpose to an otherwise aimless and sundered collection of individuals. Carlyle's hero for the modern age, then, is one who reintroduces these structures and reduces the chaos that issues from growing individualism. In describing the chaos of modern society, Carlyle utilises the language of the marketplace, emphasising the self-destructive or self-consuming nature of individualism in comparison with the organising and productive nature of heroarchy, underscoring the connection between new economic structures and society's chaos.

Emerson, for whom self-reliance is central to all aspects of life, cannot embrace the element of hero-worship and heroarchy fundamental to Carlyle's model of history. While *Representative Men* acknowledges the negative side effects of the rising marketplace economy, with Emerson noting as we have seen, that '[w]e live in a market' in which 'if I have so much more, every other must have so much less.' Emerson's indictment, however, is not tied to the individualism that the market inspires because, in short, he does not see economic individualism in terms of self-reliance. Emerson's objection to the marketplace is not that it increases self-reliance; rather, he views the marketplace as simply another system outside of the self from which the individual must be free. Detaching fundamentally from Carlyle's

ideas, Emerson constructs an economy of history in which the value of great men and of tradition generally is sundered from the world of phenomena, deriving instead from the facilitation of self-reliant thought. The function of such thought, moreover, is the assumption of consciousness and, as such, the individual's transcendence of country, time, and human body altogether.

Unlike in *Nature* and the "Woodnotes" poems, there is no single shift in *Representative Men* correspondent with or expressive of Emerson's detachment from Carlyle's thought. Rather, the conclusions of each of Emerson's chapters incorporate a jarring subversion of the genius of his representative men, in turn reflecting Emerson's intellectual detachment from the Scottish writer's conception of history. Emerson's inclusion of Napoleon in his text, a decision referred to only in passing in the preceding pages, constitutes an additional and significantly visible detachment from Carlyle's thought. Emerson's chapter on Napoleon is distinct both formally and thematically from the other chapters in *Representative Men*. The chapter ostensibly assumes the same pattern as those chapters preceding it and the one dedicated to Goethe that follows, incorporating a shift at the conclusion of the discussion that undermines Napoleon's genius. However, Emerson's account of Napoleon's character preceding this shift is uncharacteristically negative, and he is the only figure included in *Representative Men* whose impact on history is defined as fleeting. Now that Emerson's economy of history has been sketched in full, it becomes clearer why the depiction of Napoleon in *Representative Men* is anomalous and why Emerson should have included it at all.

Napoleon is the only representative man defined not by his visionary talents but by his actions. Such a portrayal mirrors the manner in which the value of great

men is measured in *On Heroes,* but is entirely discordant with Emerson's historical model – that which centres not on what representative men do but on the ideas they contribute and the manner in which we interact with them. Emerson includes Napoleon as a counterexample to his own conception of history and, it seems, as a direct engagement with Carlyle's model of history. Noting that Napoleon ultimately failed in his political aspirations because he approached life with 'sensual' and 'selfish' aims, Emerson subverts the very premise of Carlyle's historical system, charging Napoleon with the self-interest that Carlyle not only seeks to avoid, but believes Napoleon, like Cromwell, to counteract (*CW* 4:147).

Emerson's account of history in *Representative Men* is, at its heart, the systematisation of transcendence, the application of the temporal re-visionings and re-imaginings noted in his spiritual works, to time itself. As in Emerson's spiritual philosophy, in his philosophy of history, acts of abandonment achieve the transcendence of that to which one submits. In *Nature* and in the "Woodnotes" poems, this abandonment or relinquishing is to the natural world and it results not only in the apprehension of nature's spiritual value but, ideally, in a transcendence of the natural world altogether, defined both temporally and spatially. In *Representative Men*, abandonment is not to nature but to time itself, to the past and the influence that it wields. Through this act of abandonment, presented as consumption of or feeding upon the past, the individual eventually achieves transcendence of time itself, becoming aware of the single universal source from which all ideas originate.

As such, Emerson's account of history in *Representative Men* also systematises vertical time, collapsing the whole of the past into the self. In doing so,

Emerson not only performs a detachment from Carlyle, but also establishes a conceptual framework to support the notion that one can detach from all influences. In place of the past, Emerson looks to the future yet again, positing history as a perpetual widening of intellectual and spiritual circumferences.

Conclusion

The three transatlantic engagements traced and explored in the preceding chapters demonstrate that three of Emerson's seminal works engage predominately and specifically with a single transatlantic text. *Nature*, the "Woodnotes" poems, and *Representative Men* gain new meaning and significance when considered as issuances from Emerson's antagonistic engagement with specific works. In reading *Nature* in this manner, Emerson's ideological and stylistic volta in "Spirit" and, more significantly, in "Prospects," is newly illuminated, alongside Emerson's account of atonement as an act or process of reflection. In the "Woodnotes" poems, a comparative analysis of the two texts as antagonistic engagements with *The Excursion* brings "Woodnotes I" out of the shadows critically and lends the poem new significance not only as the foundation for a spiritual ascendancy between the two poems, but as the site of Emerson's engagement with the notion of society in Wordsworth's reimagined triad. In *Representative Men*, Emerson's account of history is demonstrated to be an engagement not only with Carlyle's definition of biography, but also a re-vision of Carlyle's understanding of consumption and its relationship to individualism.

These comparative readings augment recent scholarship like that of Patrick Keane, David Greenham, and Samantha Harvey, and indeed the larger transatlantic Emersonian genealogy of which these scholars are a part. While transatlantic readings of Emerson's writing tend to focus on demonstrating the various and varied strands of Romantic thought found in texts throughout Emerson's oeuvre,

the preceding explorations demonstrate that there are instances in which Emerson's engagement is more direct and pointed. In these instances, Emerson engages with texts that are particularly representative of the perceived genius of their authors. This is significant both because it demonstrates Emerson engages with texts most inducive of anxiety and thus most in need of being detached from, and because he engages antagonistically with these works in his attempts to write the same kind of texts with which he interacts. In *Nature*, the treatise of Emerson's first philosophy, he turns to a philosophical exploration of the highest and thus most anxiety-inducing calibre, *Aids to Reflection*. Similarly, in attempting to put this philosophy into verse, he turns to a poet of the highest philosophic talents, Wordsworth, and to a poem representative of these talents, *The Excursion*. Finally, in composing his own account of history – its definition, its movement, and its uses – Emerson turns to Carlyle's *On Heroes* which exemplifies the notion of biographical history to which Emerson is fundamentally drawn.

In expressing his own metaphysical philosophical treatise, philosophical poem, and historical text, Emerson combats the incursive influence of these representative British texts and asserts his intellectual independence from their ideas through antagonistic engagement. His interactions follow the model of creative reading expressed elsewhere in his oeuvre, sanctioning, even encouraging, assimilation if it is followed by a necessary act of detachment. In doing so, Emerson puts into practice, with increasing sophistication, the very account of vertical time that he develops in his transcendental spiritual philosophy, collapsing the past (the influence Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle represent) into the present through acts of assimilation that do not hinder Emerson's originality.

In *Nature*, Emerson's detachment both stylistically and ideologically from Coleridge's thought in *Aids to Reflection* is abrupt, and while such abruptness is characteristic of Emerson's later prose, it is a stylistic strategy not fully developed in *Nature*. In the "Woodnotes" poems, again there is a single volta or shift, in this instance one occurring between "Woodnotes I" and "Woodnotes II." Again, this shift is one in which Emerson departs on ideological grounds with the writer and work with which he engages. In this instance, Emerson detaches from Wordsworth's re-conception of the Romantic triad and, specifically, its incorporation of a social element. However, in performing this departure or detachment, rather than completely severing from Wordsworth formally, Emerson engages with and revises Wordsworth's dramatic mode, more subtly although no less potently performing his departure. Finally, in *Representative Men*, Emerson performs no formal break from *On Heroes*, subtly or otherwise. The detachment he performs in this instance is purely ideological; Emerson is confident that his ideological detachment is sufficiently developed to stand as independent, self-reliant thought, without the need for supplementary formal distinction from that with which he engages. In each instance, Emerson detaches from the writers and works with which he engages on the grounds of self-reliance, departing from Coleridge and Wordsworth because their accounts of the Romantic triad are not entirely subjective, Coleridge's mediated by the Bible, and Wordsworth's by society, and departing from Carlyle because his account of history and hero-worship is antithetical to Emerson's self-reliant model.

Finally, in all three instances, Emerson's engagements reveal the inextricability of personal and extrapersonal influence that these writers represent.

In engaging with *Aids to Reflection*, Emerson's ideological and formal detachment from Coleridge's text coincides with a temporal reimagining that pivots on hope through prospect, and loads all significance onto a single moment, nullifying the weight and significance of the past. These reimaginings and their emphasis on subjectivity echo typical nineteenth century responses to European influence and British influence specifically, as outlined by such scholars as Robert Weisbuch and Stephen Spender. Such temporal reconceptualisations are also found in Emerson's "Woodnotes" poems, specifically the second, again corresponding to Emerson's creative, personal detachment from *The Excursion* as a representation of Wordsworth's influence. In this sense, transcendence becomes in both instances a mode of historical thought. In *Representative Men*, this thought is systematised and history itself is proven transcendable through Emerson's incorporation of a consumptive, economically-inspired and revisionary framework.

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